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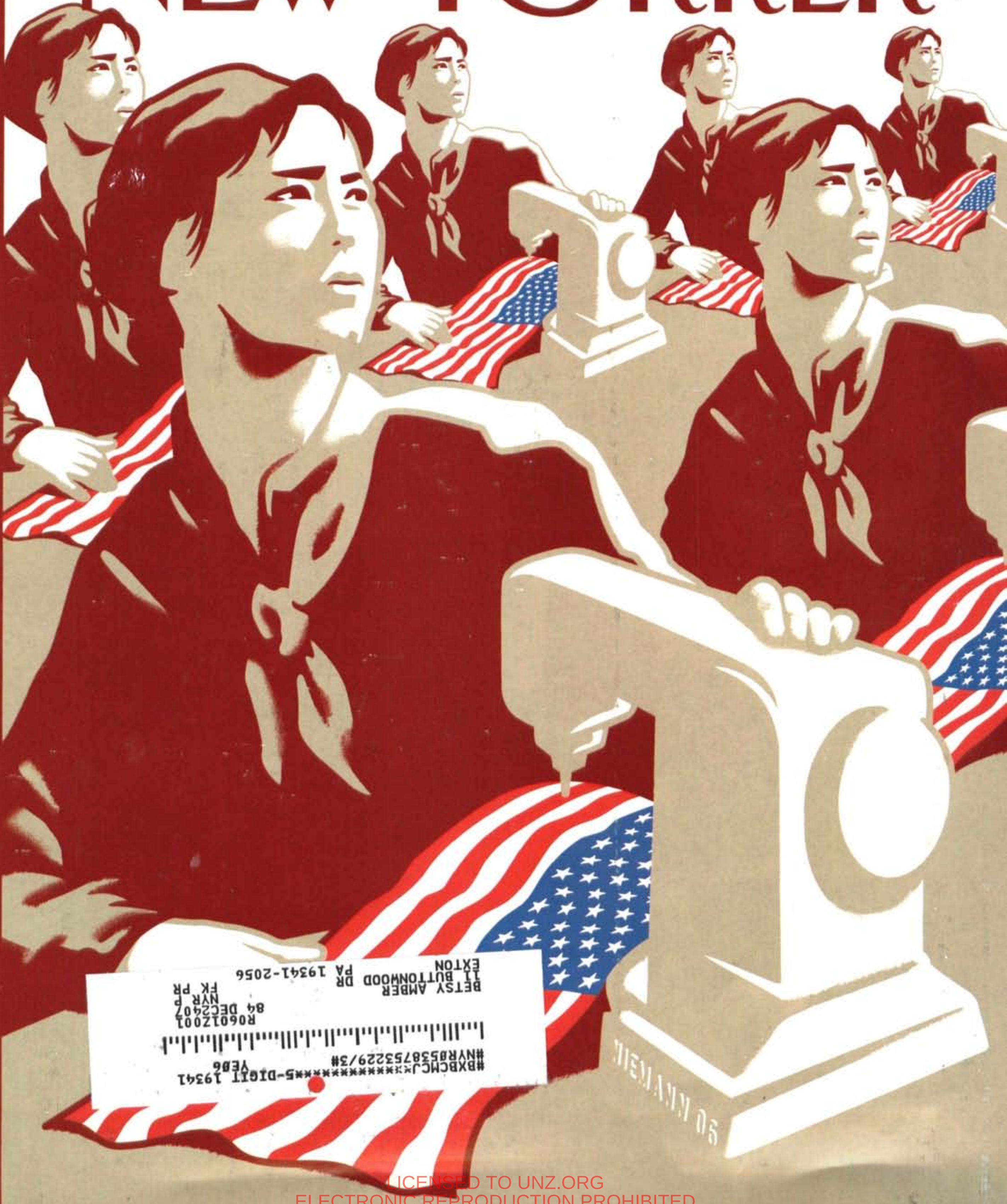
JULY 3, 2006



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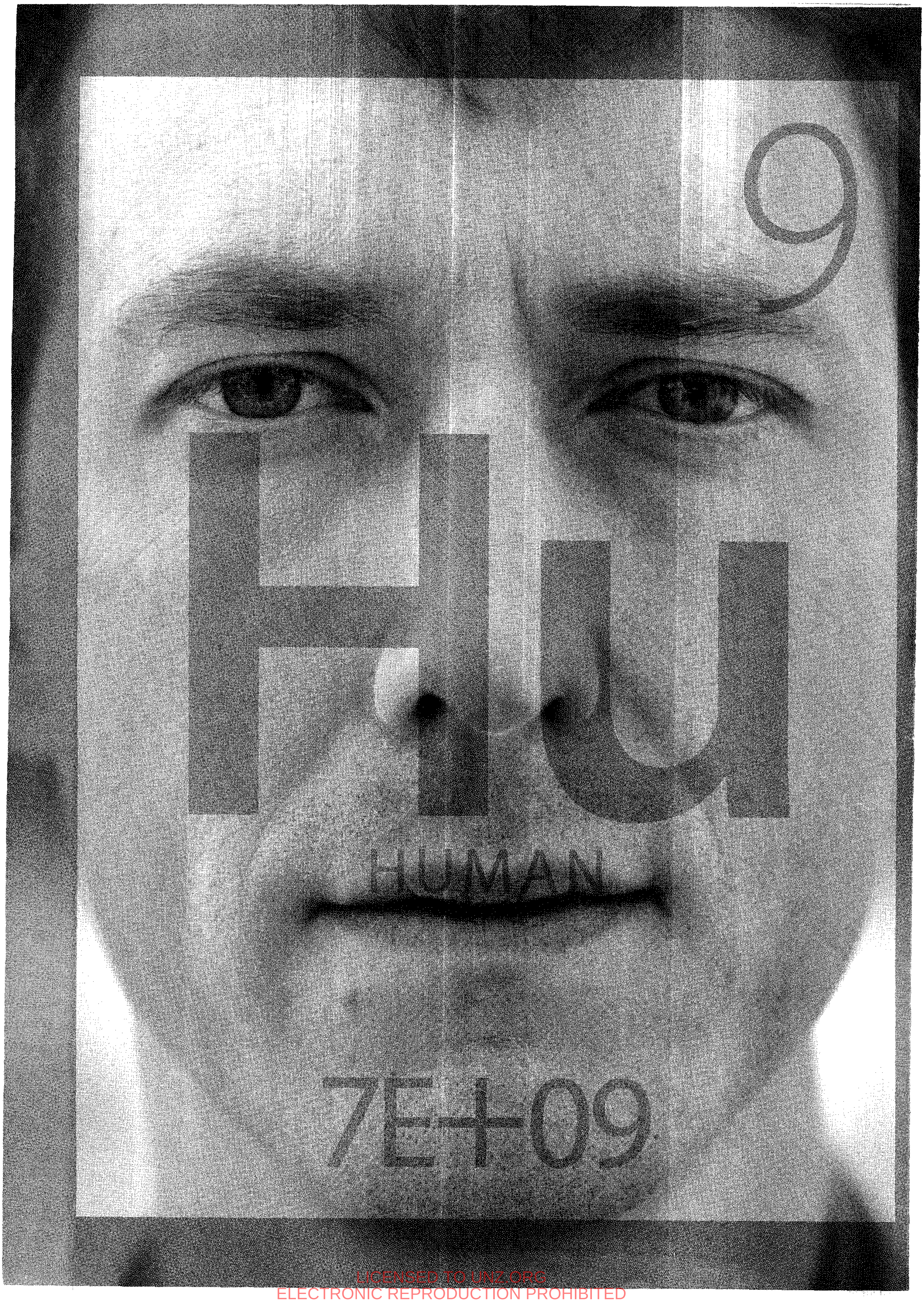
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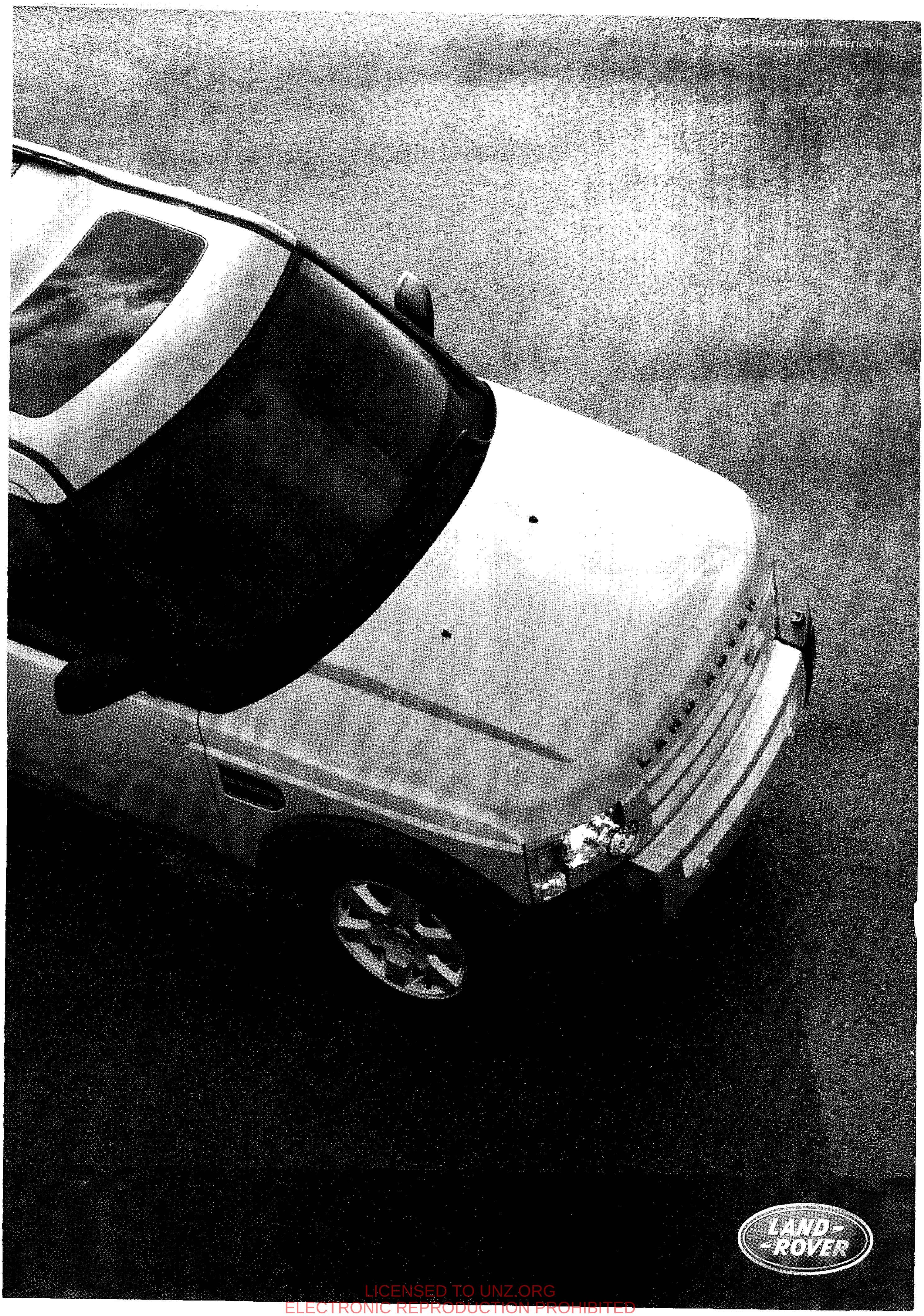
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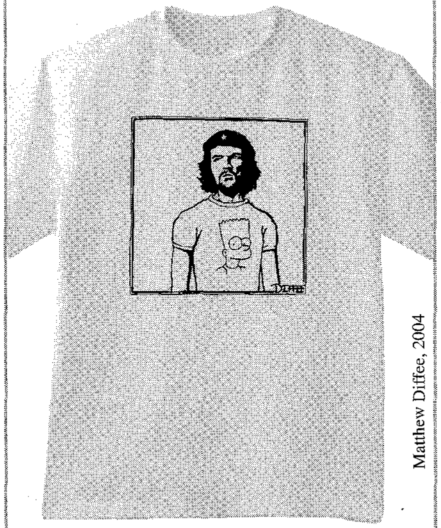

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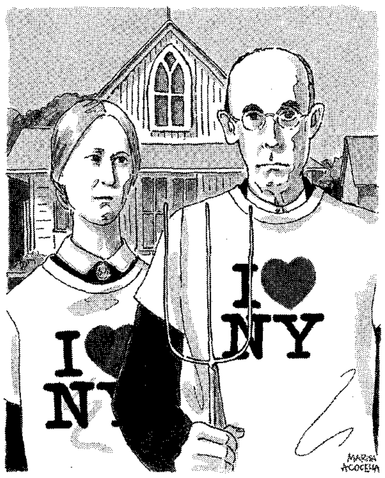

Marisa Acocella Marchetto, 2001

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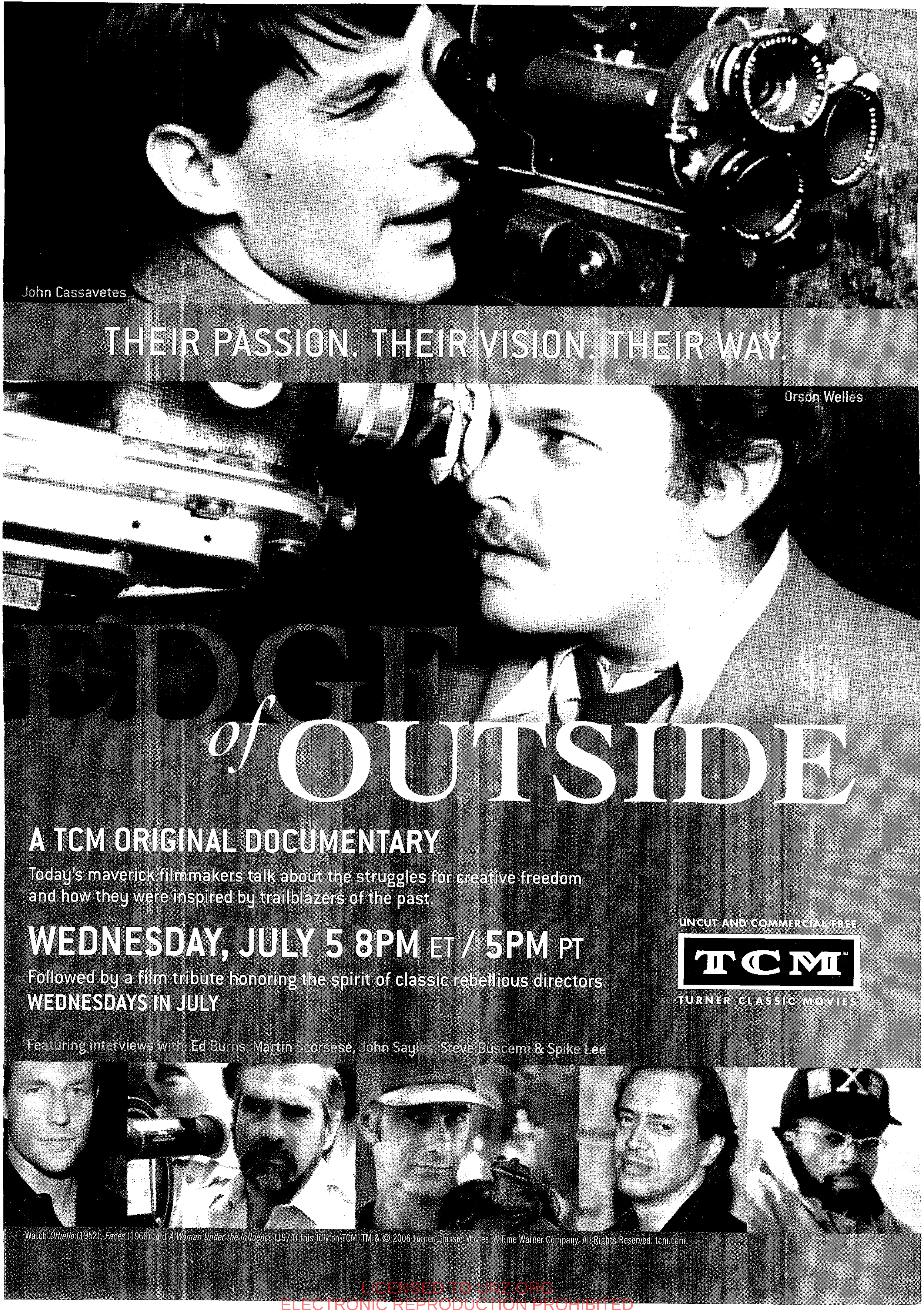

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Orson Welles
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CONTRIBUTORS

Jeffrey Toobin ("Un-American Activity," p. 28) has been writing for the magazine since 1993.

Nick Paumgarten (The Talk of the Town, p. 24) is a staff writer.

Woody Allen (Casual, p. 34) has been a contributor to the magazine for many years.

Christine Kenneally ("The Deepest Cut," p. 36) writes about science and cognition. Her book on the evolution of language, "From Screech to Sonnet," will be published early next year.

Judith Thurman ("The Absolutist," p. 56) has a collection of her *New Yorker* essays, entitled "Cleopatra's Nose," coming out next year.

Donald Reilly (Cartoons, pp. 6, 47), who died on June 18th, published more than a thousand cartoons in the magazine. A portfolio of his work is featured on newyorker.com.

Jane Mayer ("The Hidden Power," p. 44) is a staff writer based in Washington, D.C.

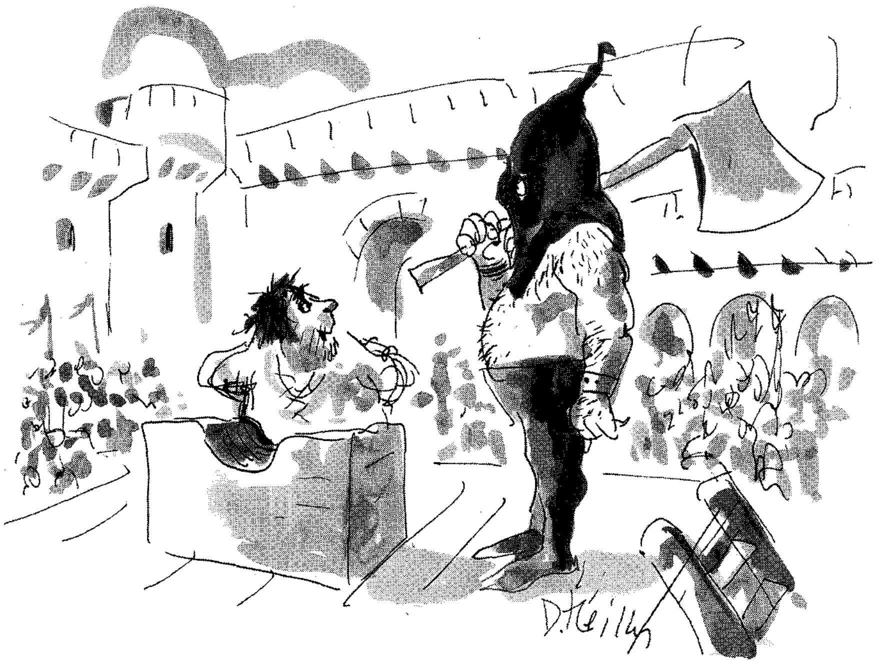
Cristina Henríquez (Fiction, p. 64) published her first short-story collection, "Come Together, Fall Apart," in April.

Gerald Stern (Poem, p. 68) received the Wallace Stevens Award of the Academy of American Poets in 2005. He has written fifteen books of poems, including "Everything Is Burning," and a memoir, "What I Can't Bear Losing."

Adam Gopnik (A Critic at Large, p. 72) is the author of "Through the Children's Gate: A Home in New York," which will be published in the fall.

Joan Acocella (Dancing, p. 82) reviews dance and books for the magazine.

Christoph Niemann (Cover) is an illustrator and designer. His children's book "The Police Cloud" comes out in the spring. ♦



"But, hey, I guess this is the price you pay for dreaming, right?"

THE MAIL

IN PRAISE OF HUEY LONG

I was distressed by Elizabeth Kolbert's review of "Kingfish: The Reign of Huey P. Long" (Books, June 12th). Kolbert suggests that political showmen consistently fascinate Louisiana voters; we indulge their corruption because we find it amusing or because we just don't care enough to oust them, and it doesn't matter to us that our positions in national rankings are deplorable. A. J. Liebling, who insightfully wrote about the Longs, grasped the crucial point that Kolbert neglects. The Longites are often the only politicians willing to act for regular folks. Huey did not merely promise free schoolbooks, free medical care, and new roads to poor people in Louisiana; he delivered them, and both whites and blacks were able to make use of them. As a Southern liberal, I envy Kolbert the luxury of demanding large victories rather than compromising for tiny ones. But now is not the time to compound the national government's efforts to paint Louisiana as a political cesspool and thus excuse its own failings. Now is the time to wonder, "Where's Huey Long when you need him?"

Katherine Mooney
River Ridge, La.

FAITH AND THE REVOLUTION

Writing on the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror, Adam Gopnik calls the Terror a "faith-based initiative," and characterizes the Enlightenment regicide Robespierre as a man of "faith and tradition" (A Critic at Large, June 5th). But Robespierre, like Voltaire before him, was a Deist, and Deism, as both its Enlightenment and its contemporary adherents would insist, is not a religious faith at all; it is not a belief system derived from revelation, sacred scripture, a priestly hierarchy, or a personal encounter with God but, rather, a theist philosophical position derived from reason and nature. The hideous pomposity of Robespierre's Festival of the Supreme Being was not calculated to reverse the process of de-Christianization in France but to complete it by offering a cynical alternative to the Catholic liturgy; as such, it was no more a religious faith than the radical editor Jacques René Hébert's cartoonish *Culte de la Raison.* (For the record, the atheist Hébert was considered by many to be even more violent and bloodthirsty than Robespierre, but that contest may be too close to call.) Gopnik's assertion that Robespierre was neither anticlerical nor anti-Christian would have come as news to the Catholic peasants of the Vendée, whose efforts to restore King and Church were brutally crushed by Republican forces.

Stephen L. Trainor
Professor of English
Salve Regina University
Newport, R.I.

THE TERRORIST MIND

Steve Coll summarizes the political scientist Robert Pape's findings about suicide bombers as showing how "the weak can humble the strong" (Comment, June 5th). This characterization, however, doesn't quite do justice to Pape's actual work, which found that suicide attacks have been considered by the bombers as defensive responses to military invasion or long-term occupation of their homeland. In the videotape left by a ringleader of the London bombings, wholly in accord with Pape's analysis, he accuses the British of continuous "atrocities against my people all over the world." Pape suggests that we reposition our military forces so as to contain aggression without occupation, an important point that was unaddressed in Coll's analysis.

Frederick Thayer
Professor Emeritus, Public and
International Affairs
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pa.

•

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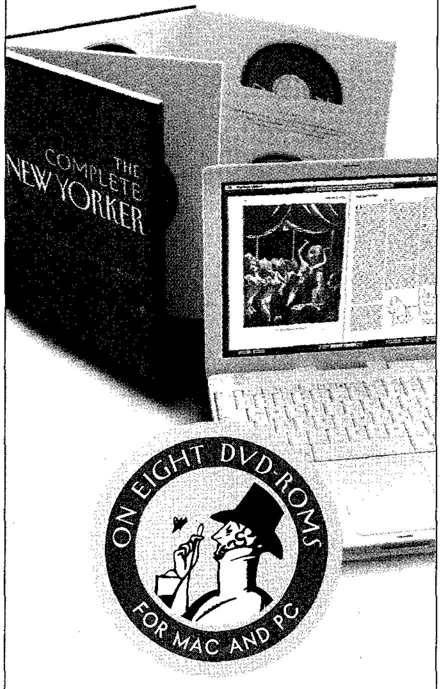

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Fireworks by Grucci, the Long Island-based company. Photograph by Gus Powell.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

NIGHT LIFE

TRIPLE PLAY

The young Swedish performer José González (his parents are Argentinean) plays classical guitar and sings crisp, often heartbreaking songs in relatively unaccented English. His music is unadorned and honest, and follows in the tradition of such folk-rock bards as Simon & Garfunkel and Elliot Smith. He has three performances this week: two sold-out shows at the Bowery Ballroom and a free concert at SummerStage. (See page 11.)

ART

TAG TEAM

Graffiti's evolution since the nineteen-seventies from territorial tagging to museum-worthy form—and its practitioners' elevation from criminals to artists—is traced in an exhibition opening this week at the Brooklyn Museum. (See page 12.)

DANCE

RUSSIAN DOLL

The Kirov's Diana Vishneva, who joined the American Ballet Theatre last year, is an intoxicating dancer with profoundly expressive performances. So far this season at the Met, she has performed in "Giselle" and "Manon"; her final appearances will be in "Swan Lake" on June 28 and Kenneth MacMillan's "Romeo and Juliet" on July 10. (See page 14.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

GOING TO TOWN

Recently, the estate of Thornton Wilder gave Ned Rorem permission to make an opera out of "Our Town," a privilege that even Copland and Bernstein could not secure. Rorem's take on Grover's Corners, with a libretto by the poet J. D. McClatchy (the founding president of the Thornton Wilder Society), comes to the Lake George Opera. (See page 17.)

MOVIES

POWER CHORDS

As part of its "Afro-Punk Weekend," BAM will show five days' worth of films at the crossroads of music and revolt, notably Shirley Clarke's "Portrait of Jason," Agnès Varda's documentary "Black Panthers," and films by the d.j./musician Don Letts about Sun Ra, Gil Scott-Heron, and the rise of punk. (See page 19.)

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THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

MACBETH
The first offering of the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park season stars Liev Schreiber in the title role. Moisés Kaufman directs. Opens June 28. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS
Labyrinth Theatre Company and the Public Theatre present the world première of a new play by José Rivera (who wrote "The Motorcycle Diaries"), about the Bolivian government's imprisonment of Che Guevara. In previews. (425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

SECRETS
In Gerald Zipper's drama, a dinner party devolves into depravity for a group of married couples. Ted Mornel directs. In previews. (St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

SHAKESPEARE IS DEAD
Tom Noonan's Paradise Factory presents a drama by Orran Farmer, about two artists dealing with the death of their child. Opens June 28. (64 E. 4th St. 212-868-4444.)

NOW PLAYING

THE BUSY WORLD IS HUSHED
Jill Clayburgh stars in a new play by Keith Bunin, in which the buried past of a theologian is discovered. Mark Brokaw ("The Constant Wife") directs. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

GODOT HAS LEFT THE BUILDING
John Griffin wrote this comedy, in which two men try to make sense of the modern world. (45 Below, 45 Bleecker St. 212-352-3101.)

THE HOUSE IN TOWN
Richard Greenberg's new play, directed by Doug Hughes. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

KING LEAR
Alvin Epstein stars in the Actors' Shakespeare Project's production. (Reviewed in this issue.) (La Mama Annex, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through July 2.)

LOOSE
WestBeth Entertainment presents the Irish comedian Tommy Tiernan. (The Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 212-239-6200.)

NERVE
An Internet date from hell brings together a perversely mismatched but erotically charged pair of neurotics, Susan (the expressive Susan Louise O'Connor) and Elliot (a mercurial Travis York). She's attractive and sarcastic, he's intense and sincere, but from the get-go there's no sense in their emotional oscillations. As the bottles of Budweiser pile up, Susan and Elliot exchange quirks and confidences, falling into an immediate and thoroughly dysfunctional relationship—which they express in surprising bursts of stage business. The playwright Adam Szymkowicz piles on the character flaws with slapdash abandon, but his dialogue doesn't ring true. Even obsessive attachments require a certain inner logic. (14th Street Y, 344 E. 14th St. 212-868-4444. Through July 1.)

PIG FARM
Roundabout Theatre Company's latest enterprise is a new comedy from the team behind "Urinetown," the writer Greg Kotis and the director John Rando, about pigs and sustainable agriculture. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

SATELLITES
In her insightful urban parable, Diana Son ("Stop Kiss") depicts the fraught lives of a yuppie interracial couple, Miles (Kevin Carroll) and Nina (the reliably potent Sandra Oh), who have a new baby, a new brownstone (they're the agents of gentrification in a run-down Brooklyn neighborhood), and a pick-and-choose approach to their daughter's cultural identity. They're determined to pass on only the perks of a multiethnic heritage, but their hubristic efforts, compounded with the stress of raising a newborn, threaten to tear them apart. Son's script can be overly deliberate—every possible cultural quandary is yanked into the foreground—but it provides a rigorous inquiry into progressive family values. Michael Greif directs. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Through July 2.)

SPRING AWAKENING
In Michael Mayer's exciting musical reimagining of Frank Wedekind's 1891 play (at the Atlantic Theatre Company), fresh-faced teen-agers in a late-nineteenth-century provincial German town dream of the salvation of the flesh. The teen-agers do the singing here, while in the stifling world of adulthood—personified by two actors (Frank Wood and Mary McCann) who play a variety of authority figures—song is an impossibility. The awakening, it turns out, is not just to sexuality but also to musical storytelling. The lyricist Steven Sater conveys, in the youths' syntactical fumblings, the inadequacy of speech to cope with the vortex of feeling, and the rigor of Mayer's direction communicates a powerful and poetic intelligence. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/26/06.) (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

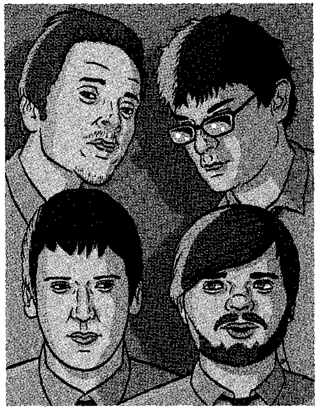
SUSAN AND GOD
The thoroughly self-involved Susan (Leslie Hendrix) returns from a visit to her charismatic English friend Lady Wiggam with a wonderful souvenir to show off to her friends—a newfound personal relationship with God. Though Susan's acquaintances are skeptical of her spiritual posturing, her estranged husband, Barrie (Timothy Deenihan brings suave conviction to the role), takes Susan's words as a personal lifeline. Vowing to end his drinking, he attempts to rekindle Susan's feelings for him and their forgotten adolescent daughter, Blossom. Rachel Crothers's 1937 comedy was a smash hit when it débuted on Broadway. There's crackle and wit in its depiction of a society woman allergic to *Kinder und Küche*, but Hendrix's portrayal of Susan is so artificial that we glimpse very little of her necessary charm. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

TREASON
In Sallie Bingham's complex and richly ambitious play, we witness the lives of the women who succored Ezra Pound, following him from Italy to America after the Allies finally seized him for multiple counts of treason. Held for a decade at St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the Criminally Insane, in Washington, D.C., Pound (Philip Pleasants portrays him as a sly old codger) carries on his improbable erotic sorcery. His harem includes his long-suffering wife, Dorothy (the fine Jennifer Sternberg), his mistress, Olga (Nicole Orth Pallavicini), and several devoted young acolytes. Though Pound is gangly, histrionic, and transparently cruel, his poetic gift besots his female subjects—and their adoration perpetuates his infantilism. The treachery here is mutual. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.)

THE WATER'S EDGE
In Theresa Rebeck's new drama, well directed by Will Frears, Richard (Tony Goldwyn) returns, after seventeen years of banishment, to the dilapidated lakeside house where he raised his family, until his third child drowned there. Although he and his wife, Helen (Kate Burton), never divorced, she has built a firewall between them; his monthly checks and his requests to see their two children—the lost Nate (Austin Lysy) and the fierce and fragile Erica (Mamie Gummer)—go unacknowledged. The outstanding cast makes the most of Rebeck's expert naturalistic exposition, and Act I, which is all about character, is terrific; Act II, which is all about commerce, is not. Rebeck paints herself into a corner, only to take the most sensational way out. (6/26/06) (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
THE FUTURE IS NOW

The Futureheads are, by disposition and avocation, very encouraging. The British band was formed when several members were working as music tutors at the Sunderland City Centre Detached Youth Project.



The urge to reach out remains: the Futureheads play frantically, as if they have to save somebody, or something, right now. One musical inspiration is XTC's early songs: jittery, barking music that depends on young tendons and brash, sunny voices. The lead singer and guitarist, Barry Hyde, writes lyrics that come across like urgent, slightly overinformed advice from an older brother: "Go home, brick yourself in, think about it properly, go back to the beginning" comes from "Yes/No," from the new album, "News and Tributes." Live, the quartet look like the chess club on tour, but they banish the nerdy aura by playing with confidence and avoiding the clever banter you might expect. Better still, all four of them sing. When the band begins to rollick, it sounds less like a rock group than a loud quartet of monks doing a brisk plainchant.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

OUT OF TOWN

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
The Main Stage production of "Amadeus," directed by Peter Shaffer. (Stockbridge, Mass. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. 413-298-5576.)

HELLO, DOLLY!
Tovah Feldshuh stars in the 1964 Tony-winning musical, at the Paper Mill Playhouse. (Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Terrence O'Brien directs "A Midsummer Night's Dream." (Garrison, N.Y. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. 845-265-9575.)

Also Playing

ARABIAN NIGHT: East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200. Through July 1. **BRIDGE & TUNNEL:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. Through July 2. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FAITH HEALER:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE FIELD:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. **THE HISTORY BOYS:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. Through July 2. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NOTHING:** 59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through July 2. **SHINING CITY:** Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **SOME GIRL(S):** Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

APOLLO THEATRE
253 W. 125th St. (212-531-5305)—June 30: The Malian singer **Salif Keita** returns. His latest album, "M'Bemba," features Kante Manfila and Ousmane Kouyaté on guitar and Toumani Diabate on kora, along with other longtime associates.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—June 28: The over-the-top Swedish band the **Ark** combines the spandex-wrapped sexuality of glam rock with the heart-racing, hip-shaking sound of seventies radio. One part Kiss, one part Queen, and one part Yaz, it's arena rock that's not likely to ever see its natural setting but will certainly put more than a few bodies in motion. June 29 and July 3: **José González** (see Central Park SummerStage) and **Juana Molina,** an Argentinean singer who lays a whispery voice over softly strummed acoustic guitars and tender electronic effects. June 30: **L-D Section II,** the musical arm of the enigmatic multimedia collective Lansing-Dreiden, delivers material from its second album of heady art rock, "The Dividing Island."

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
285 West Broadway (212-941-8100)—Through July 27: **Andy Friedman,** an illustrator and cartoonist who contributes to this magazine, is in the midst of a Thursday-night residency in which he projects slides of his work and sings. His backing band, the Other Failures, includes the novelist and *Newsweek* editor David Gates on guitar.

MICHAEL WELDON

CBGB & OMFUG
315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-982-4052)—June 28: The **Shirts,** veterans of the days when bands like Television, Blondie, and the Talking Heads were the latest thing, return to their seventies stomping ground. The street-savvy but artsy punk band known for its girl-guy harmonies recently released a new album, "Only the Dead Know Brooklyn," its first in twenty-six years. July 1: A party for the release of "Afro-Punk Vol. 1," an album collecting the ear-and-expectation-shattering songs of **Tamar Kali, Cipher, Game Rebellion, Cutlery,** and others. The show is part of a weekend of films and music at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. (See also Southpaw and Movies.)

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 30: An indie-rock hat trick, with **TV on the Radio, Matt Pond PA,** and **Voxtrot.** July 1: The astonishing vocalists **Angélique Kidjo** and **Vusi Mahlasela** pay tribute to the South African giants Brenda Fassi and Miriam Makeba.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 28: The rock and soul singer and slide guitarist **Bonnie Raitt,** in a benefit show for this summer concert series. The acoustic-blues throwback **Keb' Mo'** warms up the crowd. June 29: The Broadway vocalist **Audra McDonald** and the gospel singer **Liz McComb.** July 1: New York City's pan-ethnic Afro-beat orchestra **Antibalas**—the name is Spanish for "bulletproof"—takes its inspiration from the Nigerian legend Fela Kuti. It shares a bill with **Balkan Beat Box.** The percussionist Tamir Muskat and the saxophonist Ori Kaplan are veterans of such local bands as Firewater, Big Lazy, and Gogol Bordello. Their shifting ensemble relies on a variety of non-Western musicians to deliver a dizzying array of musical hybrids. July 2: The excellent Brazilian singer and songwriter **Seu Jorge,** who, so far, has gone from the favelas to Hollywood (he's the one who sang Portuguese renditions of David Bowie songs in Wes Anderson's "The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou"). Also on the bill is **José González,** a Swede born to Argentinean parents, who plays the acoustic guitar with commanding grace. The songs on his début album, "Veneer," are sultry and sad at the same time. He sings in English, and the deft use of one of his songs in a commercial for a high-definition TV has put him on the charts in the U.K.

CODA
34 E. 34th St. (212-685-3434)—June 29: **Eric Lindell.** A self-described former skate punk from San Mateo, California, the singer and songwriter Lindell went to school in New Orleans, where he soaked up that city's rich musical history. He sings with a soulful, raspy voice that has echoes of Jeff Buckley. But unlike that late troubadour, Lindell leans much more toward R. & B. It's an approach that earned him a record deal with the blues label Alligator ("Change in the Weather," featuring the steady drumming of Stanton Moore, came out earlier this year) and made him popular on the West Coast and in his adoptive city. Expect him to deliver a seasoned performance here, and to walk away with more than a few new fans.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—July 2: Like his countryman Youssou N'Dour, the Senegalese singer **Baaba Maal** offers soaring melodies and churning percussion, and his lyrics dabble in mystical imagery.

MAKOR
35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—June 28: **Romano Drom,** a Gypsy quintet from Budapest, plays music

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from the Oláh Gypsy tradition, an ancient Hungarian style that influenced both Liszt and Bartók. Their melancholy songs are full of expressive singing (in Romany), bittersweet melodies on the accordion and violin, and slightly cacophonous rhythms from two of the band members beating aluminum cans.

SOUTHPAW

125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—June 30: The opening-night party of the Afro-punk program at BAM (see Movies) features **DJ Spooky** performing live before video footage of Lee Perry, Sly and Robbie, and Peter Tosh from the Trojan archives. He'll be doing battle with the legendary d.j. **Don Letts**, the man who introduced British punks to reggae, back in the seventies. The **Eternals**, from Chicago, **Shawn Hewitt**, from Toronto, and **Nouveau Riche**, from Philadelphia, will also be on hand. (See also CBGB & OMFUG.)

WEBSTER HALL

125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—June 29: The eclectic, prolific brother-sister rock band the **Fiery Furnaces**. June 30: The British band the **Futureheads**.

IRIDIUM

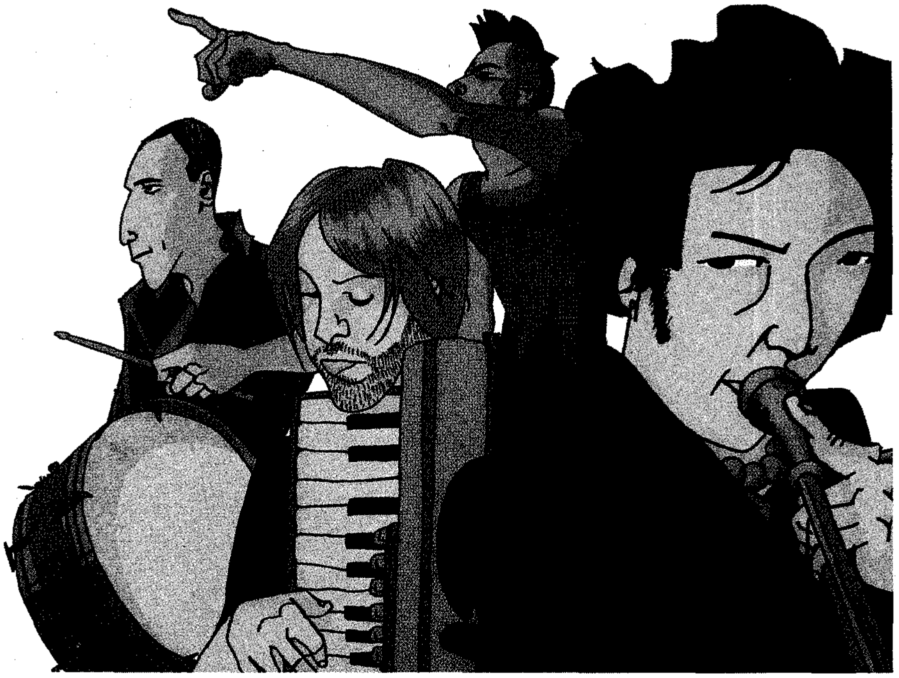
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—The trombonist **Fred Wesley** may be best known for his R. & B. work with James Brown and others, but his passion for jazz, if less recognized, is no less solid. He's here June 29-July 2 with a quartet. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**. The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—June 27-28: **Gonzalo Rubalcaba** performs solo. The Cuban pianist has evolved from a speed-demon virtuoso to a meditative improviser. June 29-July 2: Rubalcaba leads a trio with the bassist **Matt Brewer** and the drummer **Jeff (Tain) Watts**.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—June 27-July 2: The **Paul Motian** band. Three electric guitarists as well as two saxophonists now bolster the drummer's ingenious, and surprisingly light-on-its-feet, ensemble.



The forward-thinking dance band Balkan Beat Box comes to SummerStage.

JASHAR AWAN

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through July 1: **Jessica Molaskey's** enchanting way with standards gets the perfect instrumental complement: the sleek trio of her husband, **John Pizzarelli**.

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 28-July 1: **Andy Bey**, who has risen from being a jazz footnote—dig out those early-seventies Horace Silver recordings—to a respected vocal stylist.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 27-July 2: **Lee Ritenour**, a smooth-jazz guitarist with a superior technique and an unabashed love for Wes Montgomery.

CARLYLE HOTEL

Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through July 1, **Eartha Kitt**.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA

Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—June 27-July 2: The great contemporary drummer **Herlin Riley** unites with other Wynton Marsalis band alumni, including the bassist **Reginald Veal** and the pianist **Eric Reed**.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Girodet: Romantic Rebel."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Treasures of Sacred Maya Kings."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"The Art of Betty Woodman"** gathers ceramic works from throughout the artist's career. Through July 30. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** The roof garden has reopened for the summer, with four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them are "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that produces a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh."** Through July 9. ♦ **"Kara Walker at the Met: After the Deluge."** Through July 30. ♦ **"AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"On Photography: A Tribute to Susan Sontag."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Raphael at the Metropolitan: The Colonna Altarpiece"** reunites two panels and five predella scenes from an altarpiece painted in the early sixteenth century for a Franciscan convent in Perugia; the pieces have not been in a room together in more than three centuries. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Dada,"** a large and illuminating survey of the anti-art movement that countered despair with absurdity. Through Sept. 11. ♦ **"Douglas Gordon: Timeline"** includes the artist's most famous work, the glacially paced "24 Hour *Psycho*." Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Against the Grain: Contemporary Art from the Edward R. Broida Collection."** Through July 10. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper."** Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Zaha Hadid."** Through Oct. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Full House,"** the Whitney's seventy-fifth-anniversary extravaganza, opens this week, on June 29; a floor devoted to Edward Hopper is already installed and open to the public. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Graffiti,"** a survey of the urban art form, opens June 30. ♦ **"Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—**"Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, and Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape"** tracks the contributions of the three painters in fomenting appreciation for wonder sights like Niagara Falls, the Maine coast, and Yosemite. Through Oct. 22. ♦ **"Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500-2005."** Through Oct. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Jean-Étienne Liotard (1702-89): Swiss Master."** Pastels don't get much respect, but Liotard argues for a closer look at the medium. A peripatetic Swiss, he took his box of chalks with him to Geneva, Paris, Sicily, Constantinople, and Vienna, drawing the local nobility as he went. His most important patron was the Empress Maria Theresa, the only female ruler in the Hapsburg dynasty. A miniature of the Empress in Turkish costume serves as an early indicator of the Orientalism that would become a nineteenth-century craze. More fascinating, and poignant, are the childhood portraits of the Empress's brood of sixteen, including ten daughters with the first name Maria (among them Maria Antonia, a.k.a. Marie Antoinette). Wall text accompanying the portraits describes their noble marriages, battles with smallpox, and status as Beethoven's benefactors. Through Sept. 17. ♦ **"Veronese's Allegories: Virtue, Love, and Exploration in Renaissance Venice."** Through July 16. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Unknown Weegee."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Atta Kim: On-Air."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Tempo, Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Marianne Brandt."** Through Aug. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Eva Hesse: Sculpture."** Through Sept. 17. ♦ **"Max Liebermann: From Realism to Impressionism."** Through July 30. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3. For the duration of the Hesse show, the museum will also be open on Saturdays, from 11 to 5:45, with no charge for admission.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—**"Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964-1980"** is a fragmentary sampling rather

than a comprehensive survey, but it succeeds in demonstrating how varied sixties and seventies abstraction actually was. Among the artists represented are Sam Gilliam, Tom Lloyd, William T. Williams, and Howardena Pindell. Through July 2. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

ED MUSANTE
Tightly framed portraits of birds—ospreys, blue jays, kestrels, goldfinches—are painted on the stamped wooden lids of cigar boxes; the decorative papers on the box corners enclose the ornithological images, and the two-inch depth of the box mounts them. The resulting objects have a roughened charm. A Western bluebird perched on a strand of barbed wire is framed by red, green, and gold paper trim advertising El Verso cigars; the stamped words "Made in Havana Cuba" are imprinted on the breast of a tanager. Through July 1. (Thiebaud, 42 E. 76th St. 212-737-9759.)

Short List

JAMES CASTLE / WALKER EVANS: Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through Aug. 11. **WANGECHI MUTU:** Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212. Through July 7. **GUY PÈNE DU BOIS:** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave. 212-535-5767. Through June 30. **MAN RAY:** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 212-752-1223. Through June 30. **LOUIS STETTNER:** Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007. Through July 29. **"JIANG HU":** Jack Tilton, 8 E. 76th St. 212-737-2221. Through July 15.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DIETMAR BUSSE
Busse, a photographer in temporary exile from New York last year, made these austere winter landscapes in and around the German village where he was born. Several of his strongest images center on single, leafless trees—one silvered with a coat of snow, all of them dramatically spare and sculptural against blank skies. Flat, green fields disappear at the horizon in a line of mist-covered trees; a dappled gray horse gallops across a blur of white; an eviscerated bird, feathers scattered all around, spreads its wings one last time in the snow. In Busse's pictures from home, his remembrance of things past suffuses the present with real tenderness. Through July 1. (Tecchia, 529 W. 20th St. 212-741-2900.)

TEUN HOCKS
Hocks, a silver-haired Dutch artist who looks rather like the French actor Jean Gabin, appears in his elaborately staged and painted photographs as a solitary, hapless Everyman flummoxed by the surreal world. Channelling M. Hulot, Hocks is dapper and comic and tries to make the best of things, delivering a pile of presents to the door of an otherwise demolished home or pouring water into a puddle on a barren plain so a lone duck can swim. But he's just as likely to find himself on all fours, crawling out of a hole in the baseboard into the shadow cast by an enormous cat. Played out in an understated cartoon landscape where Disney meets Dali, Hocks's mock melancholy has a Chaplinesque charm. Through July 7. (P.P.O.W, 555 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044.)

DANIEL JOSEPH
A devotee of the earnest-teen-age-bedroom aesthetic, Joseph has plastered the gallery with drawings, snapshots, magazine clippings, intimate correspondence, and paintings with bumper-sticker-style slogans like "born ready" and "hey check this out god." The centerpiece is a video featuring unnatural closeups of friends and random folk encountered in the last year who were asked three questions: "What is your name and title?"; "When is the last time you cried and why?"; "Why do you do what you do?" Young artists and hipsters-at-large labor to provide the most creative answers for this Generation Y census. A ravaged leather chair, held together by duct tape, serves as both seating for watching the video and overdetermined evidence of the show's neo-bohemian ethos. Through July 1. (Buia, 541 W. 23rd St. 212-366-9915.)

STEPHEN SHORE
Work from both of Shore's effortlessly artless breakthrough color series, "American Surfaces," from 1972, and "Uncommon Places," initiated the following year and continuing for another decade, are combined here in yet another retrospective. After the big "American Surfaces" show at P.S. 1 last fall, the impact of this choice grouping might be a bit muffled, but, image by image, there's probably not a better photo show in town. And pages from Shore's meticulous daily journals—noting towns visited, meals eaten, and TV programs watched—ground his version of "On the Road" solidly in the pop, grilled-cheese-and-"All in the Family" mainstream. Through July 7. (303, at 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

"A BRIGHTER DAY"
Title aside, the prevailing mood in this group show is sour hysteria and giddy horror—and if the twenty-person roster were edited a bit it would be pretty powerful. As it is, standouts include David Altmejd, whose sculpture presents a figure rather like a svelte wolfman, impaled upon and merging with a crystalline structure of mirrored spikes. Aïda Ruilova's short video fills the gallery with a nerve-grating soundtrack of a woman screaming or choking, while Trenton Doyle Hancock's mural repeats in wobbly vertical columns, like a punished child writing on a blackboard, "You Deserve Less." Through July 14. (James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

"MAPPLETHORPE/WARHOL"
Although this exhibition of celebrity portrait and self-portrait photographs was inevitable, it didn't have to be quite so predictable. Organized as a series of juxtapositions, the show compares and contrasts Warhol's and Mapplethorpe's pictures of, among others, Grace Jones, Keith Haring, Debbie Harry, Truman Capote, Arnold Schwarzenegger, each other, and themselves. This last group proves to be the most interesting, certainly in Mapplethorpe's case, because it includes Polaroids from early in his career that look especially vivid alongside Warhol's. In all cases, Mapplethorpe's work is the more effortful; he didn't have Warhol's genius for the snapshot, but he knew how to turn a portrait into a performance. Through July 28. (Sean Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)

Short List

MARK DI SUVERO: Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through July 28. **JACKIE GENDEL:** Bailey, 511 W. 25th St. 212-989-0156. Through July 1. **ZAHA HADID:** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 212-633-6999. Through July 29. **ALEXANDRE ORION:** Foley, 547 W. 27th St. 212-244-9081. Through Aug. 12. **RICHARD SERRA:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Aug. 11. **LAURIE SIMMONS / ANDREW GRASSIE:** Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337. Through June 30. **"INFECTED LANDSCAPE":** Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410. Through June 30.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

MEL BOCHNER
What is the color of money—the word, that is, rather than the currency—and "die" and "crazy" and "contempt" and "useless"? And, once you've opened this Pandora's box, what about their syn-

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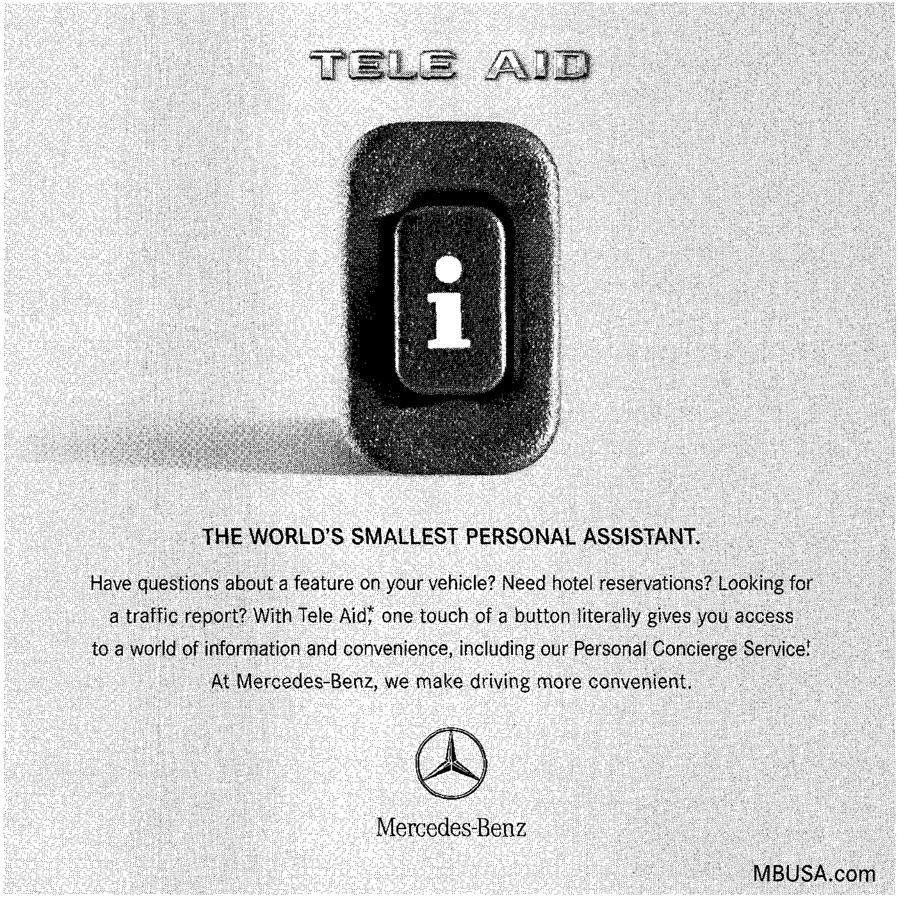

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
WILD AND WILDER

One of the odder offerings in Film Forum's "Essential Wilder" series is "The Major and the Minor," from 1942 (playing July 4), Billy Wilder's first film as an American director. It's the kind of excruciatingly square farce that the publication of "Lolita" would render obsolete. Ginger Rogers is a down-on-her-luck New York career girl who wants to go home to Iowa and doesn't have enough money for the train; she poses as a twelve-year-old in pigtails, rides for half fare, and winds up in Ray Milland's sleeping compartment. Strangely attracted to her but sure that she's twelve, he takes her back to the Midwestern military academy where he teaches, and then suffers as various teen-age Lotharios try to get their hands on her. The story doesn't "work" anymore, but it's perversely fascinating as a case of Hollywood's treading in felt slippers on the edges of the forbidden, and Rogers has a ball. She had made a reputation in the thirties as a wisecracking realist; this time the acid remarks slip out sideways, between wide-eyed pouts and demands for milk (with a drop of coffee).

—David Denby

onyms? What font should be used and what hue for the background? These are the problems faced by conceptualists like Bochner, whose life work, since the sixties, at least, has been mining the visual and philosophical ramifications of language. This batch of paintings finds him raiding the thesaurus (the new Yale edition, to be exact) and creating canvases that are graphically concise and colorful. There's a kind of bold-faced absurdity to the project, and yet Bochner forces viewers to confront words as images, not just ciphers, as objects subordinate to painting, whose highest laws are color and form. Through July 1. (Freeman, 560 Broadway. 212-966-5154.)

"SWEET TABOOS: A MINI TIRANA BIENNALE IN NEW YORK"

A sampler from the full Tirana Biennale brings seven examples of cutting-edge Albanian art to New York. An ugly start is made by Joanna Rytel's video about a Swedish woman's affair with an African man, which makes a common mistake by assuming that the relief of confessing racist thoughts has in itself something valuable to say about racism. Other work fares better. An insouciant, abstract animation by Adel Abdessemed is hypnotic to look at, and so—in a very different way—is the slide show of fast, evocative pen-and-ink drawings by Ivan Grubanov, which picture vignettes from Slobodan Milosevic's trial in the Hague. Through July 1. (Apex Art, 291 Church St. 212-431-5270.)

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

In Kevin McKenzie's "Swan Lake" (2000), the role of the sorcerer Von Rothbart is divided in two, with a horned monster conjuring a seductive version of himself, in purple thigh-high boots, under whose spell all women inevitably fall, from Odette to the princesses at the ball, and even the queen mother herself. The ballet completes its run on Saturday evening, after which Gillian Murphy leaps in with her hunting bow as Sylvia, a nymph and follower of the goddess Diana, in Frederick Ashton's 1952 pastoral folly set to Delibes's marvellous score, which received its company première last spring. ♦ June 28 at 2: "Swan Lake" (with Veronika Part, Marcelo Gomes, and David Hallberg). ♦ June 28 at 8: "Swan Lake" (with Diana Vishneva, José Manuel Carreño, and Sascha Radetsky). ♦ June 29 at 8: "Swan Lake" (with Irina Dvorovenko, Maxim Beloserkovsky, and Gennadi Saveliev). ♦ June 30 at 8: "Swan Lake" (with Julie Kent, Gomes, and Radetsky). ♦ July 1 at 2: "Swan Lake" (with Michele Wiles, Hallberg, and Saveliev). ♦ July 1 at 8: "Swan Lake" (with Paloma Herrera, Ángel Corella, and Jesus Pastor). ♦ July 3 at 8: "Sylvia" (with Murphy). (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 15.)

"MULTIPLE UNDO & OTHER DISTORTIONS"

"Sitelines," the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's free performance series, plants the consistently interesting downtown veteran Douglas Dunn and the up-and-comer Elke Rindfleisch in Elevated Acre, a park sandwiched between the East River and towering buildings. (55 Water St. 212-219-9401. June 27-29 at 12:30.)

FUGATE/BAHIRI BALLET NY

Judith Fugate and Medhi Bahiri's all-purpose company shows its adaptability in a program of five pieces by as many choreographers. John Butler's Dvořák-scored "Othello" (1976) is revived in a company première, while "Jazz Fools," a 1990 Francis Patrelle pas de deux created on Fugate and Bahiri, is dusted off for a new generation. "Two's Company," a melancholy trio created by Toni Pimble for the 1992 "Diamond Project," gets a lift from the winsome, stemlike Lindsay Purrington. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. June 27 at 7:30, June 28-30 at 8, July 1 at 2 and 7:30, and July 2 at 2.)

CATALYST

Emily Johnson's Minneapolis-based troupe makes its New York début with "Heat and Life," her response to global warming. Although discussions follow each performance (except Saturday's) and a fifty-state consciousness-raising tour is planned, the work itself is no Al Gore PowerPoint presentation. Instead, Johnson generates an atmosphere of high anxiety. Dancers in orange hazard gear wield extension cords and bark innocuous-ominous phrases through walkie-talkies ("I'm assuming you'll take care of this." "That's what I was afraid of"). (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. June 28-July 1 at 7:30.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA

The flamenco troupe, led by Soledad Barrio and her husband, Martín Santangelo, returns with "Cielo de Tierra" ("Heaven of Earth"). (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-352-3101. June 28-30 at 8, July 1 at 2 and 8, and July 2 at 2 and 5. Through July 30.)

NICHOLASLEICHTERDANCE

The abstract hipster Nicholas Leichter starts the party for his tenth-anniversary season with four works commissioned over the years by Dance New Amsterdam. The newest, a première, is "Sweetwash Special," in which the performers evoke the serendipitous intimacy of the street, moving in and out of islands of light. The self-described "minimalist soul" singer Eisa Davis, an abstract hipster herself, provides the score; on Thursday, her band plays live. The program also includes Leichter's manic solo "Animal" (1997); his rowdy male quartet "Undertow" (2000); and an excerpt from his interpretation of "Carmina Burana," performed earlier this year with the Brooklyn Philharmonic. (280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-279-4200. June 29-July 1 at 8.)

"TARANTELLA: SPIDER DANCE"

Alessandra Belloni (an artist-in-residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine) offers her rendition of tarantella, a southern-Italian folk dance. Belloni's company will perform variations of this ecstatic, stamping, whirling dance on the floor, on stilts, and in the air, accompanied by Italian folk instruments—tambourine, Renaissance guitar, finger cymbals—and "acoustic world music" arranged by John La Barbera. (Synod Hall, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 110th St. 212-665-4516. June 29 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

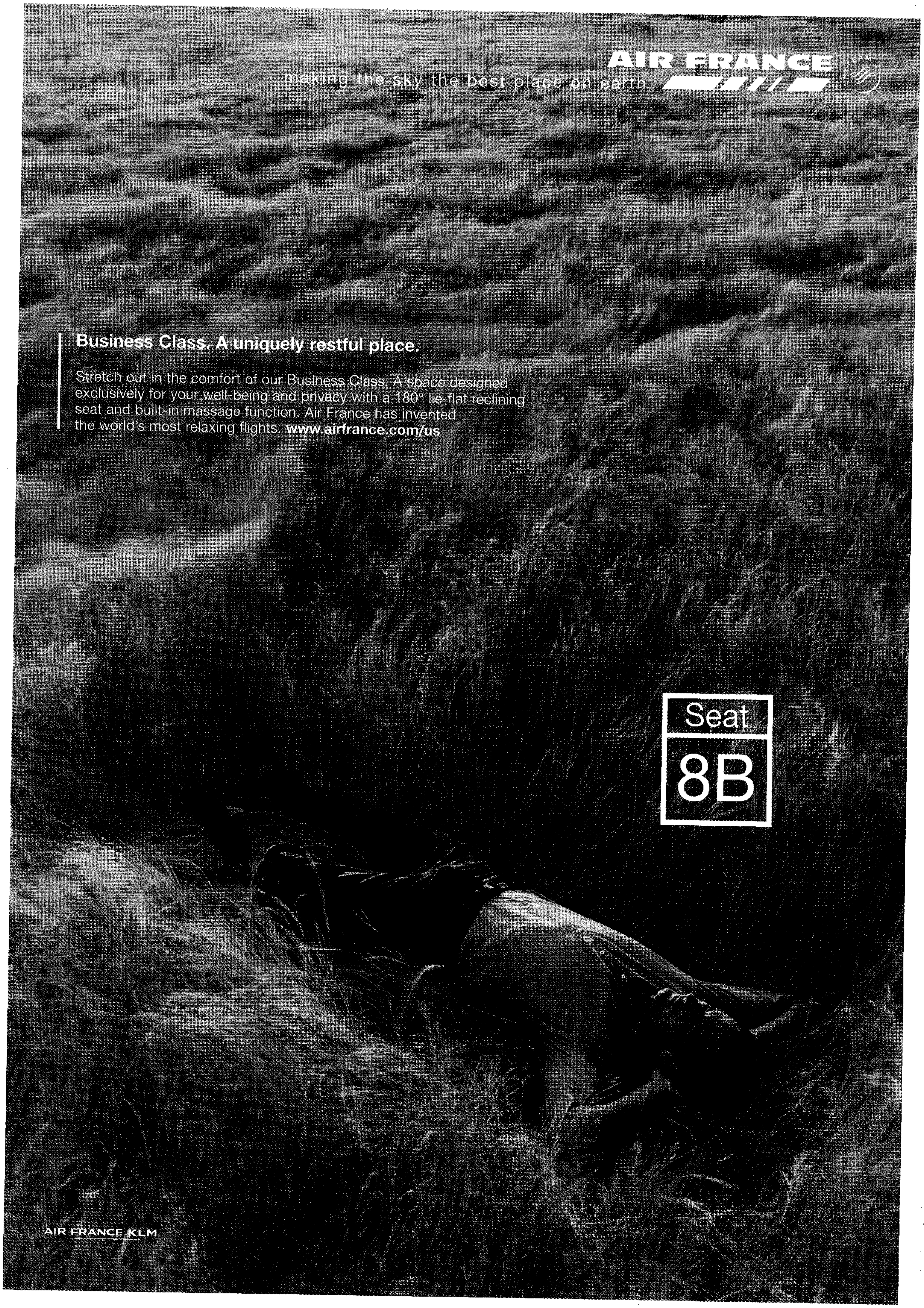
JACOB'S PILLOW

A bastion of humanism for six decades now, the Limón Dance Company returns to the Ted Shawn Theatre, where it performed in its very first year. Along with a suite from Limón's classic "A Choreographic Offering," this program features "Recordare," a sunny representation of Mexican Day of the Dead festivities, dancing skeletons and all, by Lar Lubovitch; and "Evening Songs," a procession through Dvořák choral works, which is Limón-like in its luminous simplicity but was choreographed by Jiří Kylián. In the Doris Duke Studio Theatre, the rocketing talent Aszure Barton and her four-year-old company present her new piece, "Over/Come." (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. June 28-30 at 8, July 1 at 2 and 8, and July 2 at 2 and 5. For a complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org. Through Aug. 26.)

DONNA UCHIZONO COMPANY

To open Bard's SummerScape Festival, Uchizono's company (on a shared bill with the pianist Markus Groh) offers two premières. In the first, "Moving Liszt," Groh plays excerpts from "Années de Pèlerinage" while being dollied from place to place on a raised platform, amidst a quartet of dancers. Uchizono echoes the music's complexity with abrupt directional shifts, or a foot slamming into the spot just vacated by a hand. The subject of the second première, "Flying Tall," is the guest performer Mikhail Baryshnikov, who looks dapper in a mock turtleneck. Flanked by two strong women, he moves to an uncanny variety of sounds, from his companions' applause to snatches of construction noise recorded at his new arts center. (Fisher Center for the Arts, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. 845-758-7900. June 29-July 1 at 8.)

RICHARD MERKIN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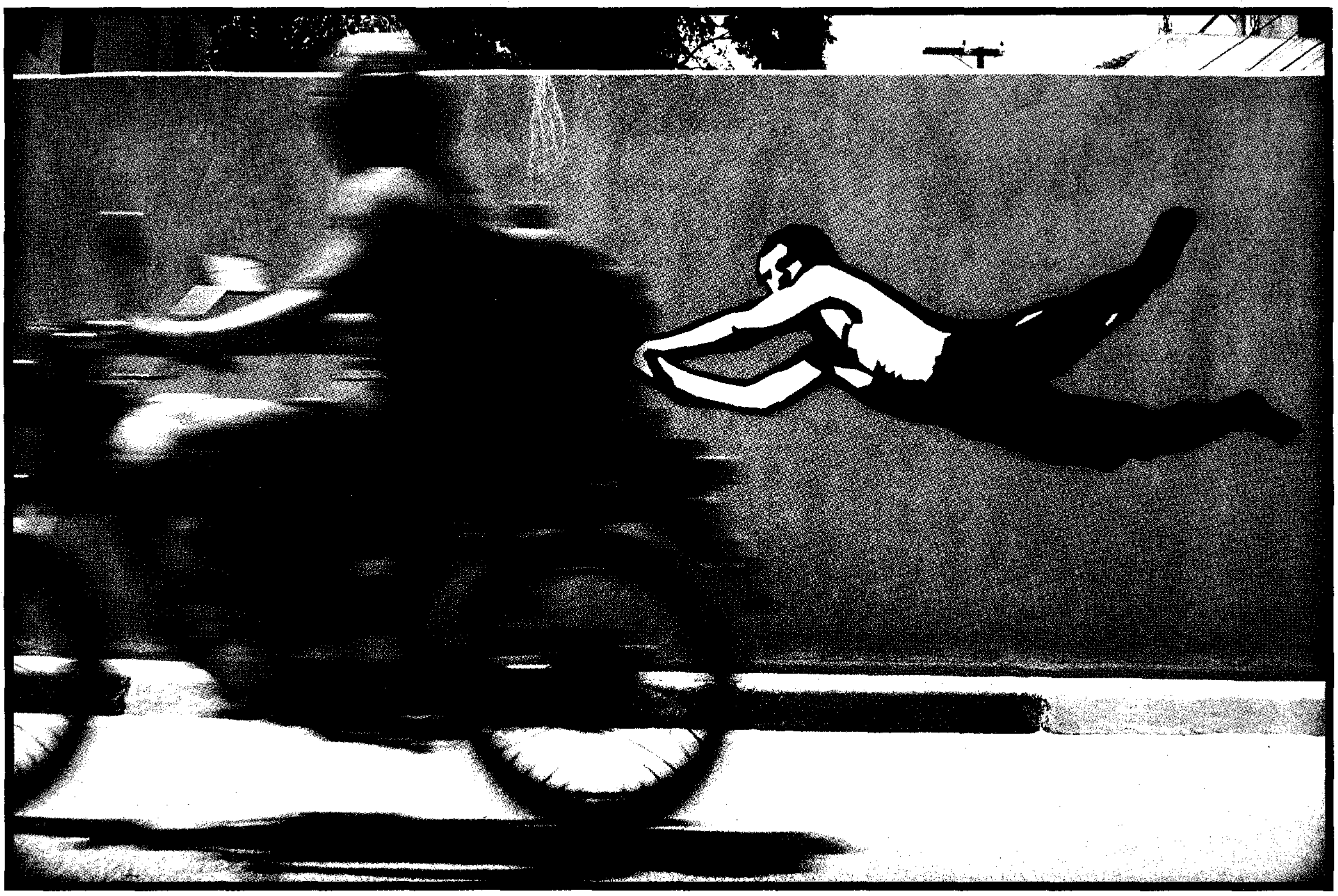


A show of work by the Brazilian photographer Alexandre Orion (including "Metabiotica 8," above) is now at Foley.

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Breaking up its busy tour schedule, the orchestra scampers back to Avery Fisher Hall for "Summertime Classics," a recently inaugurated series that brings the normally outdoor "light classics" repertory inside. It opens with Bramwell Tovey conducting an all-Russian blowout that features Borodin's tender "Polovtsian Dances" along with Tchaikovsky's thundering First Piano Concerto (with Alexander Kobrin, in his Philharmonic début) and "1812 Overture." (212-875-5656. June 29 at 7:30, June 30 at 8, and July 2 at 5.)

INSTITUTE AND FESTIVAL FOR CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE
The Mannes School of Music offers its third annual workshop and concert series, under the direction of the pianist Marc Ponthus. June 28 at 8: The percussionist Daniel Druckman and his colleagues in the Speculum Musicae ensemble offer a varied selection of works by such formidable modern masters as Louis Andriessen, Milton Babbitt, and Lukas Foss. ♦ June 29 at 8: If Yan Maresz's music is half as interesting as his background—his principal teachers were the neo-Romantic David Diamond, the spectralist Tristan Murail, and the jazz guitarist John McLaughlin—then this all-Maresz concert, performed by such musicians as the clarinettist Alan Blustine and the cellist Edward Arron, should be a diverting occasion. (150 W. 85th St. 212-580-0210, ext. 4884.)

BARGEMUSIC
June 29-30 at 7:30: The violist Jeanne Mallow, the talented inheritor of the Romantic string-playing tradition of her forebears—the violinist Joseph Fuchs and the violist Lillian Fuchs—joins the pianist Vladimir Valjarevic to perform works by Brahms (a posthumous sonata movement), Schumann, and Rachmaninoff (an arrangement of the Cello Sonata in G Minor). ♦ July 1 at 7:30 and July 2 at 4: The young cellist Efe Baltacigil, a recent winner of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, teams up with two old friends from his days at the Curtis Institute, the violinist Pavel Ilyashov and the cellist Andrius Zlabys, in a program of music by Pärt ("Fratres"), Schumann, and Brahms (the Piano Trio in B Major, Op. 8). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

OUT OF TOWN

TANGLEWOOD
Boston's musical duchy—still the best place to hear the best music in summer—comes to life once more. June 29 at 8:30: The festival opens with Garrick Ohlsson, a witty and athletic player, who begins a survey of the Beethoven piano sonatas with a program crowned by the Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, "Appassionata." ♦ June 30 at 8:30: The Juilliard String Quartet, regular guests at Tanglewood, offer a characteristic mixture of German classics (by Schubert and Brahms) and contemporary music (Ezequiel Viñao's "The Loss and the Silence"). ♦ July 2 at 2:30: Ohlsson returns to perform the Sonatas Nos. 9, 11, 16, and 14 ("Moonlight"). ♦ July 3 at 8:30: Bernard Haitink, who has conducted a number of memorable performances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, leads the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, a fabulous student ensemble, in works by Mozart (the "Haffner" Symphony), Strauss, and Shostakovich (the Symphony No. 10). (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
Westchester's elegant alternative to Tanglewood has become a multifaceted festival that packs an appealingly diverse range of events into a relatively short schedule. This week's offerings are on the lighter side. June 30 at 8: The New York Festival of Song—represented this time by soprano Amy Burton, the tenor Hal Cazalet, the baritone Andrew Garland, and the pianist Steven Blier—offers "Earthly Delights," an unusually wide-ranging survey of British song that includes not only serious works by Britten (one of the "Michelangelo Sonnets") and Elgar but also songs by Lennon and McCartney ("Norwegian Wood") and Noël Coward. ♦ July 1 at 8: Two people close to Leonard Bernstein—Michael Barrett, who conducts, and the maestro's daughter Jamie Bernstein, offering her recollections—participate in "Bernstein on Broadway," a program of his effervescent show tunes that features the sopranos Judy Kaye and Lisa Vroman (who headlined in City Opera's production of "The Most Happy Fella") and the baritone James Martin, backed by the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

ASTON MAGNA FESTIVAL
The violinist Daniel Stepner's estimable early-music series devotes its thirty-fourth season to Mozart. The soprano Dominique Labelle, who always gives this repertory a touch of glamour, is featured in a program that begins with "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" and ends with a concert performance of the composer's early singspiel "Bastien und Bastienne." (Simon's Rock College, Great Barrington, Mass. 800-875-7156. July 1 at 5.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
The music of Mozart, placed into unexpected contexts, is the theme for this year's series. July 1 at 6: In "Prodigies at Play," Jie Chen, the grand-prize winner in Yamaha's second E-Competition for pianists, offers a recital at the woodland hall that features Mozart's Variations in C Major, K. 179, along with Schumann's Sonata No. 2 in G Minor, Harold Meltzer's "Toccatas" (2001), and finger-cracking works by Albéniz and Balakirev ("Islamey"). ♦ July 2 at 3: "Mozart, American Style" features not only the chamber version of the boy genius's Piano Concerto No. 14 in E-Flat Major but also music by Haydn (the "Lark" Quartet) and Arthur Foote, performed by the pianist Melvin Chen and the Miami String Quartet. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

BETHEL WOODS CENTER FOR THE ARTS
As the children who came of age at Woodstock have grown respectable, so has the sacred ground of Max Yasgur's old farm—it's now the site of this state-of-the-art cultural center, which will offer a range of classical, jazz, and pop-music concerts in its inaugu-

ral season (including a two-day Woodstock Anniversary Concert in August). It all begins with a program by the New York Philharmonic (under the direction of Bramwell Tovey), performing a slate of popular works by Rachmaninoff (the "Paganini Rhapsody"), Tchaikovsky (the "1812 Overture"), Gershwin, and Bernstein with two popular soloists—the pianist Lang Lang and the soprano Audra McDonald. Fireworks by Grucci follow the performance. (Bethel, N.Y. 845-454-3388. July 1 at 7.)

MOHAWK TRAIL CONCERTS
The thirty-seventh season of this chamber-music festival, quietly tucked away in the northwestern Massachusetts countryside, begins, as many will this year, with music by Mozart—in this case, a selection of early works as well as the grand Piano Quartet in G Minor, in a concert that also features music by Leopold Mozart and J. C. Bach, two of the young composer's main influences. The performers include the soprano Sudie Marcuse and the pianist John Van Buskirk, who plays his part on a restored square fortepiano from 1770. (Federated Church, Rte. 2, Charlemont, Mass. 413-625-9511. July 1 at 8.)

LAKE GEORGE OPERA: "OUR TOWN"
Everyone knew that America's favorite stage play had within it the seeds of an opera as graciously sophisticated as Thornton Wilder's original conception; now Ned Rorem, collaborating with the poet and librettist (and Wilder scholar) J. D. McClatchy, has finally gone and done it. After a successful première at the Indiana University School of Music, the piece comes to this long-established summer company for its first East Coast performances. (Spa Little Theatre, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 518-587-3330. July 1 at 8 and July 5 and July 9 at 1.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
There is nothing quite like hearing the slow movement of Debussy's sole String Quartet unfold on a lazy summer afternoon. Those who agree can get their fix at the venerable string-quartet festival, where the admired Avalon String Quartet plays the entire work along with pieces by Mozart (the Quartet in D Major, K. 499) and Schumann (the Piano Quintet, with Pamela Mia Paul). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. July 2 at 3.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE BLOOD OF MY BROTHER
A documentary directed by Andrew Berends, about an Iraqi Shiite who considers joining the insurgency. Opening June 30. (Cinema Village.)

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA
Meryl Streep plays the big-time fashion editor; Anne Hathaway plays her beleaguered assistant. Directed by David Frankel. Opening June 30. (In wide release.)

THE GREAT YOKAI WAR
A horror movie, directed by Takashi Miike, about a boy who wanders into a spirit war. In Japanese. Opening June 30. (Anthology Film Archives.)

THE MOTEL
In this comedy, written and directed by Michael Kang, a teen-age boy works at his family's hot-sheet motel. Opening June 28. (Film Forum.)

RANK
A documentary about professional bull riders, directed by John Hyams. Opening June 28. (IFC Center.)

SAY UNCLE
Peter Paige directed and stars in this drama about a gay man who faces opposition when he seeks work as a "manny." Opening June 30. (Quad Cinema.)

STRANGERS WITH CANDY
A drama based on the television series, about a recovering drug addict (Amy Sedaris) who returns to her high school. Directed by Paul Dinello. Opening June 28. (Chelsea Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

SUPERMAN RETURNS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening June 28. (In wide release.)

WHO KILLED THE ELECTRIC CAR?
A documentary by Chris Paine, about an electric car that General Motors invented and then destroyed. Opening June 28. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

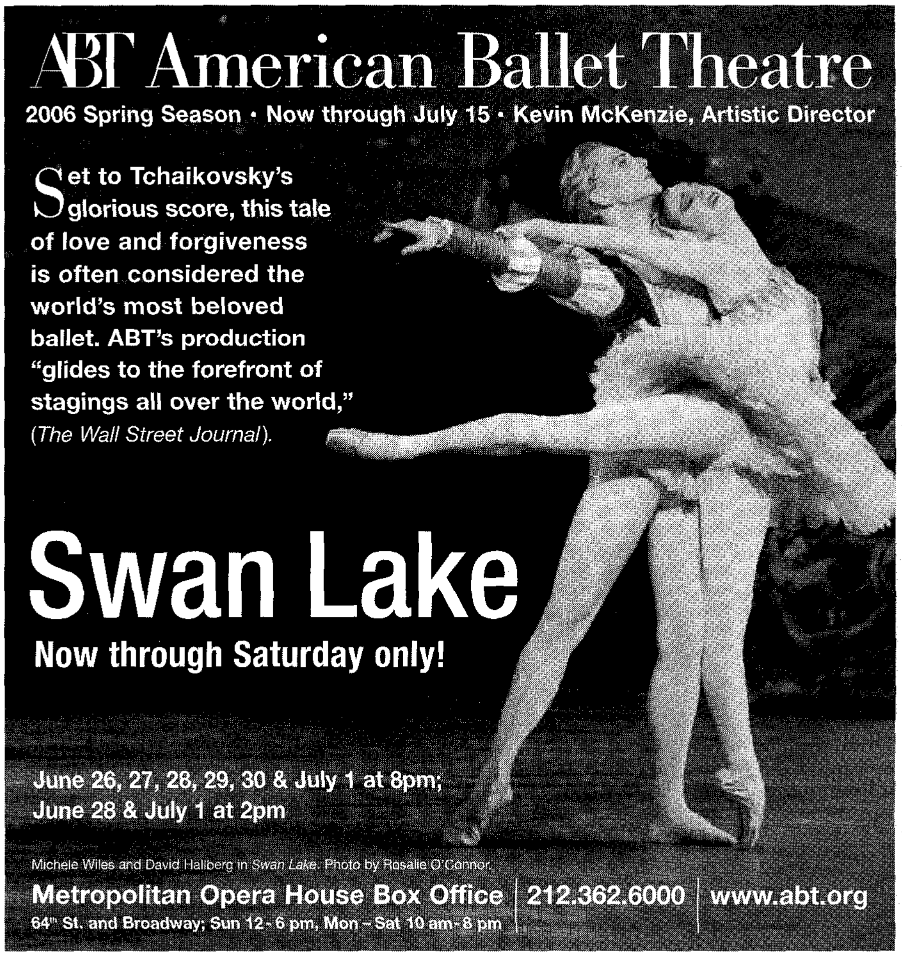
THE BREAK-UP
This romantic comedy, directed by Peyton Reed, stars Vince Vaughn, looking a little paunchy, as a hyper-articulate Chicago tour guide with loutish habits, and Jennifer Aniston, looking great naked from the rear, as an art-gallery saleswoman who wants peace and order. They buy a condo together, and quarrels ensue—many quarrels, some of them nicely sustained. The snippy-snappy dialogue is good enough to make you regret that the movie wasn't better thought out as a piece of comic construction. The main trouble: what each one does professionally never feeds into the plot, so we are left, again and again, with nothing but the Relationship. Eventually, the two run out of arguments, and the movie turns earnest and dull, but there are good bits nonetheless. With Jon Favreau, who renews his onscreen partnership with Vaughn, and Judy Davis, as Aniston's dragon-lady boss.—*David Denby* (In wide release.)

CARS
The new Pixar project depicts an America populated wholly by cars. They do not merely cram the roads; they run the gas stations and the diners, too. (If you expect that such a fantasy must, in these fuel-nervous times, have a satirical edge, think again.) Owen Wilson, tacking between the smarmy and the plaintive, provides the voice of Lightning McQueen—a cocky, friendless race car who, after a bunch of mishaps, winds up in a small town and there, with the help of some newfound companions, finds his purpose in life. All of which is a reminder that Pixar is a subsidiary of Disney. The digital detailing is often astonishing, but much of the sly wit that perked up "Toy Story" and "The Incredibles" seems to have drained away, and, in the end, the strain of having to care about the fate of grinning automobiles is just too much. Can it be right that a film of this sophistication should remind us of "Thomas the Tank Engine"? Other voices belong to Bonnie Hunt, Larry the Cable Guy, and a growling Paul Newman.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/19/06.) (In wide release.)

THE DA VINCI CODE
Ron Howard's film of Dan Brown's novel is faithful to both the spirit and the letter of the original. Such loyalty will be balm to the souls of his forty million readers, who have come to accept the book as holy writ. Others will greet the news as they would an outbreak of the plague. The movie stars Tom Hanks as Robert Langdon, an American professor who, partnered with a young French cryptographer (Audrey Tautou), untangles a knot of clues. These begin with a corpse in the Louvre, continue in a country house owned by a conspiracy expert (Ian McKellen), lead to London for a touch of local color, and end in a Scottish church, where the true descendant of Jesus is revealed, to regrettable sounds of mirth in the audience. Our heroes' opponents include a devilish bishop (Alfred Molina) and a murderous monk (Paul Bettany). It should have been possible to mold the nonsense of the novel into brightly colored hokum; instead, Howard, in collusion with his screenwriter, Akiva Goldsman, has chosen to serve up two and a half hours of verbose and joyless gloom. If you can't face watching this movie, you could always pray for it.—*A.L.* (5/29/06.) (In wide release.)

THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS: TOKYO DRIFT
The third in a series about sexy boys and their supercharged cars stars Lucas Black as a reckless rebel who, after a drag race gone wrong, flees to Tokyo to live with his father. There he discovers the thrill of drift racing (rocketing a car sideways by gunning the engine and hitting the brakes at the same time) with a group of yakuza wannabes. The story is boilerplate misunderstood-teen drama, with macho posturing and rainy-night sulking, but the director, Justin Lin, films the vehicular stunts with verve and precision. In Japanese and English.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
For long stretches of this epochal documentary about global warming, Al Gore talks before an audience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Michele Wiles and David Hallberg in *Swan Lake*. Photo by Rosalie O'Connor.

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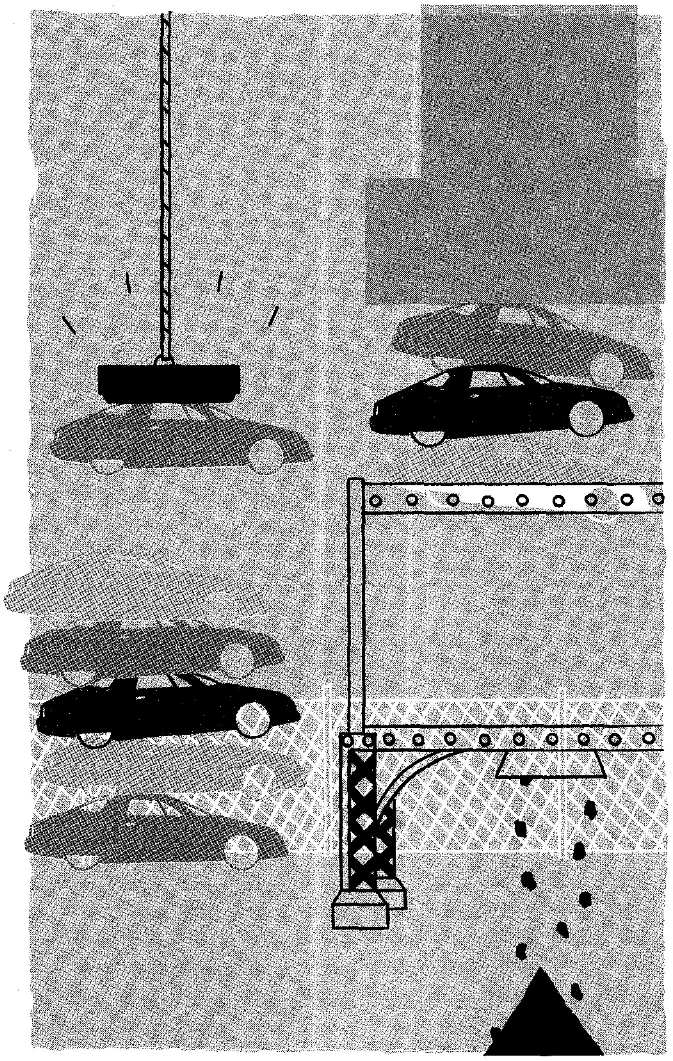
with the aid of slides and charts. There are side trips to fissured ice caps, disappearing glaciers, and stretches of newly parched and broken terrain. The science is detailed, deep-layered, vivid, and terrifying. But there are also passages in which Gore, off-camera, speaks in an intimate voice that we've never heard from him before; he talks about lying by the side of a river on a lazy summer day—the commonplace idyll of a lone person in tranquil ecstasy, utterly at home in nature. "An Inconvenient Truth" begins that way, and the entire movie, with its procession of nightmares and dangers, plays off that idyll; each time Gore returns to it, the mood has greater resonance. If even half of what Gore says is true, this may be the most galvanizing documentary you will see in your lifetime. Directed by Davis Guggenheim.—*D.D.* (6/12/06) (In wide release.)

JACQUES LACAN'S PSYCHOANALYSIS, PART ONE

Give him these forty-five minutes and he'll turn your mind inside out. It's up to the viewer to decide whether this result is desirable. In a filmed lecture from 1974, the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-81) elaborates the main idea of his life's work, that "the unconscious speaks, and thus it depends on language," and acts out this notion with his own florid, allusive discourse and his emphatic, theatrical delivery. Though Lacan plumbs the mysteries of body and soul, of sex and society, his imposing presence is not that of a guru but of a living monument, and, like other baroque French monuments (think Versailles), his orations embody the absolute power that gave rise to them—in his case, the tyranny of the raging libido. Filming Lacan for French television, the director Benoît Jacquot, then in his twenties, boldly faced up to the assault, putting his camera front, center, and close, as if daring the Master to take his best shot. In French.—*Richard Brody* (Walter Reade Theatre; July 2-3.)

LEONARD COHEN: I'M YOUR MAN

For the singer-songwriter's fans, a dicey proposition. This documentary by Lian Lunson is not a filmed portrait of Cohen, who, sly and lucid in his seventies, is onscreen only rarely, to deliver a meagre handful of pithy recollections and to sing one song (in the star company of U2). Most of the film features a 2005 concert in Sydney of such notables as Rufus Wainwright, Kate and Anna McGarrigle, and Nick Cave singing Cohen's songs, plus talking-head tributes from Cave, Bono, and others. Even the evocative archival material (including home movies of Cohen as a child) is needlessly chopped and tweaked. It is hard to avoid the frustration of imagining what savory footage of Cohen may have been left on the cutting-room floor.—*R.B.* (Film Forum.)



The documentary "Who Killed the Electric Car?" opens June 28.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

LUCKY STAR

This beautifully wrought silent curio (originally released in an inferior, part-talkie edition) stars Janet Gaynor as a tough yet needy farm gal and Charles Farrell as a power lineman who returns from the First World War without the use of his legs. The great romantic of early Hollywood directors, Frank Borzage uses their connection to illustrate love's power to heal busted lives. A wizard with performers, he accentuates Gaynor's slyness, then lets her gamine charm emerge softly and coltishly. Borzage establishes Farrell as a two-fisted guy, then emphasizes his dreamy qualities when he turns into a wheelchair-bound Mr. Fixit. Both of them have the glow that comes from emotion as well as lighting. When Farrell washes Gaynor's hair with eggs, Borzage and his cast conjure a feeling of sweet foolishness. The set design and cinematography achieve a backwoods storybook splendor, and the whole movie has a fablelike timelessness, as if it had emerged from a magic box instead of a 1929 film can.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; July 2.)

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III

Tom Cruise returns as Ethan Hunt, the superfit secret operative who needs a team of fellow-agents to help him retrieve his missing sense of humor. They must also track down Agent Lindsey Farris (Keri Russell) in Berlin. She has been captured by Owen Davian (Philip Seymour Hoffman), who represents an even greater threat to world stability than Truman Capote. This third installment of the franchise, directed by J. J. Abrams, is the most streamlined to date, with a succession of gargantuan set pieces (the best of them in the Vatican) and dogged attempts to perforate the eardrums of the audience. Little of it makes sense, and the treachery of insiders—a source of worry to Hunt's superiors, played by Laurence Fishburne and Billy Crudup—has become the most wearisome feature of the genre. Toward the end, Abrams seems to run out of juice, and the role of Hunt's new wife (Michelle Monaghan) feels insultingly plaintive and thin. A tip for the next sequel: the closer these movies get to the old TV series, with its indefatigable teamwork, the more gripping they become. The mission was never meant to be a one-man show.—*A.L.* (5/15/06) (In wide release.)

NACHO LIBRE

The story is just an excuse for Jack Black to jump around. He's Ignacio (Nacho), a corn-chip-fed cook at a school for Mexican orphans run by elderly monks. He looks great in thick curly hair and mustache, his dark eyes glinting with the dirtiest thoughts entertained by any religious functionary since Rasputin. To make money for the orphanage, and to win the love of a pure and chaste nun, he puts on a cape and mask in the style of Mexican wrestling (*lucha libre*), links up with a skinny thief (Héctor Jiménez) to form a tag-team pair, and heads for the arena. If you've seen the posters (and how can you not have seen them?), with Black bare-chested and looking like a baby Latino Superman in red-and-blue tights, then you've got a good idea of the movie. There are many wrestling matches in mock-*lucha* style, which become, for some of us at least, as boring as actual wrestling. Written by Jared and Jerusha Hess and Mike White and directed by Jared Hess.—*D.D.* (6/26/06) (In wide release.)

OVER THE HEDGE

The DreamWorks animation unit ups the creative ante with this comedy, about a group of hibernating forest creatures who awaken to find that civilization has settled into their own back yard. When the cute-as-a-button animals begin foraging for food in the garbage of the new housing development, the increasingly unhappy residents take exterminator action. Directed by Tim Johnson and Karey Kirkpatrick, the movie has a loony, slapstick verve, and the star-studded voice work is uniformly entertaining.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION

Robert Altman's re-creation of Garrison Keillor's incomparable weekly NPR show has many lovely moments and an over-all fluency, but it's mellow to the point of inertia—so determined not to work up a sweat that it doesn't work up any heat, either. What we see is not quite the show—that is, it's billed not as the actual "Home Companion" but as a local Midwestern show of no great fame. Some wealthy religious Texans have bought both the local station and the show's home—the Fitzgerald Theatre, in St. Paul, Minnesota—and are closing them down. The movie is devoted to a backstage view of the last broadcast (which, confusingly, is not a haphazard amateur production but something like a typically brilliant "Home Companion" with some movie stars added). Large but soft-shoed, bearish but courtly, Keillor pads around, controlling a flow of comedy and music performed by a cast that includes Meryl Streep, who looks great and sings well, and Woody Harrelson and John C. Reilly, as Dusty and Lefty, singing cowboys with mean, dirty lyrics. Emotionally, the movie is a queasy experience: "Prairie" is widely loved, so it's hard to understand why Keillor promotes this self-pitying story of extinction by religious philistines. With Linda Williams and other "Prairie" regulars.—*D.D.* (6/12/06) (In wide release.)

THE ROAD TO GUANTÁNAMO

Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross's film about three real-life British nationals mistakenly imprisoned at Gitmo is confusingly told and possibly disingenuous (the men's account of how they wound up in Afghanistan, where they were captured, doesn't make much sense), but the scenes of suffering and humiliation—of the prisoners being hammered by their American guards and interrogators—are both convincing and hellish to sit through. Like Soviet inquisitors during the purge trials of the thirties, the Americans need to force a confession out of their charges in order to prove to themselves that their government hasn't made a mistake. The prisoners aren't allowed the slightest authority as human beings—and certainly not the authority of innocence. The movie cuts back and forth between a reënactment of the events (with nonprofessional actors) and interviews with the actual young men, which are completely unrevealing. The prison-camp scenes were shot in Iran.—*D.D.* (6/26/06) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

WORDPLAY

The cult of crossword puzzles is the subject of this genial documentary by Patrick Creadon, which centers on Will Shortz, the editor of the *Times* crossword and the puzzle guru on NPR. Creadon interviews such crossword-puzzle addicts as Bill Clinton, Ken Burns, and Jon Stewart, all of whom clearly revel in the daily challenge of word trickery, and shows the puzzle creator Merl Reagle as he constructs a brainteaser from scratch. A year's worth of puzzle-solving, for a skilled hundred people, culminates at the annual American Crossword Puzzle Tournament, in Stamford, Connecticut, presided over by the benevolent Shortz himself, where a group of superbrains battle it out. Competition is tense, and the film captures the sense of excitement and community felt by a group of people who usually play alone.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

X-MEN: THE LAST STAND
Brett Ratner, taking over as director of the airborne "X-Men" franchise from Bryan Singer, ignores the liquid beauty and poetic fantasy of Singer's work and trashes his actors by repeatedly slamming them around or leaving them stranded. It's a gruelling, repetitive piece of work, much of it execrably staged. Where is it written that computer-generated imagery has to be used to extend the violence of comic-book plots? Bring on the aesthetes. With Ian McKellen, used more centrally than before, and in good voice; Patrick Stewart; Hugh Jackman; Famke Janssen; and the body, Rebecca Romijn, who is regrettably killed off before we can get more than a look at her.—*D.D.* (6/5/06) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

CLICK: In wide release. **THE LAKE HOUSE:** In wide release. **LOWER CITY:** Sunshine Cinema (6/19/06). **POSEIDON:** In wide release (5/22/06).

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"NewFilmmakers Presents." June 28 at 7: Short-film program. ♦ June 28 at 8: "An Incident at Bridgeville" (2005, Jason Sibert). ♦ "Voom HD Lab Presents." June 28 at 7: Program 1, short films, including "Rite of the Black Sun" (2006, Bradley Eros). ♦ June 28 at 9:30: "Epiphany: The Cycle of Life" (2006, Ali Hossaini). ♦ "Essential Cinema." June 29 at 7:30: Short films by Peter Kubelka, including "Our Trip to Africa" (1966). ♦ "Goethe-Institut New York Presents." June 29 at 8: "The Curse" (1988, Ralf Huettner; in German).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—The films of Michelangelo Antonioni. Except where noted, all films are in Italian. June 28 at 4:30: "Making a Film for Me Is Life" (1995, Enrica Antonioni) and "Antonioni Vista da Antonioni" (1978, Lino Micciché). ♦ June 28 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Beyond the Clouds" (1995; in French, English, and Italian). ♦ June 29 at 4:30: "Antonioni: The Vision That Changed Cinema" (2001, Carlo di Carlo) and "The Last Scene of 'The Passenger' " (1974, André S. Labarthe). ♦ June 29 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Passenger" (1975; in English). ♦ "Afro-Punk Weekend." June 30 at 2 and July 4 at 4:30: "Negroes with Guns" (2004, Sandra Dickson and Churchill Roberts) and short films. ♦ June 30 at 4:30 and July 1 at 9:30: "Paris Is Burning" (1990, Jennie Livingston). ♦ June 30 at 6:50, July 1 at 4:30, and July 4 at 2: "Afro-Punk" (2003, James Spooner), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ June 30 at 9:30 and July 2 at 6:50: "Dancehall Queen" (1997, Don Letts and Rick Elgood). The July 2 screening will be introduced by Letts. ♦ July 1 at 2 and July 4 at 6:50: "Pressure" (1975, Horace Ové). ♦ July 1 at 6:50: "Punk: Attitude" (2005, Letts), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ July 2 at 2: "NO!" (2006, Aishah Shahidah Simmons), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ July 2 at 4:30: "Portrait of Jason" (1967, Shirley Clarke). ♦ July 2 at 9:30: "Black Panthers" (1967, Agnès Varda) and "Finally Got the News" (1970). ♦ July 3 at 2: "In Motion: Amiri Baraka" (1983, St. Clair Bourne), followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ July 3 at 4:30: "Blue Collar" (1978, Paul Schrader). ♦ July 3 at 6:50: "The Cool World" (1964, Clarke), introduced by the actor Rony Clanton. ♦ July 3 at 9:30: "All Power to the People" (1996, Lew Lew Lee). ♦ July 4 at 9:30: "Sun Ra: Brother from Another Planet" (2005, Letts) and "Gil Scott-Heron: The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" (2004, Letts).

BRYANT PARK
Sixth Ave. between 40th and 42nd Sts. (212-768-4242)—Through Aug. 21: HBO Bryant Park Film Festival. July 3 (lawn opens at 5; screening begins at dusk): "M*A*S*H" (1970, Robert Altman).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. June 28-29 at 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, and 10: "Pandora's Box" (1929, G. W. Pabst; silent). ♦ Through July 20: The films of Billy Wilder. June 30-July 1 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Double Indemnity" (1944). ♦ July 2 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Some Like It Hot" (1959). ♦ July 3 at 1, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, and 10: "A Foreign Affair" (1948). ♦ July 4 at 1:10, 5:20, and 9:30: "The Major and the Minor" (1942). ♦ July 4 at 3:10 and 7:20: "Ball of Fire" (1941, Howard Hawks).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—The films of Akira Kurosawa. June 30, July 2, and July 4 at noon: "Yojimbo" (1961; in Japanese). ♦ July 1 and July 3 at noon: "Sanjuro" (1962; in Japanese). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." June 30-July 3: "Car Wash" (1976, Michael Schultz).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—The films of James Mangold. June 28 at 6: "Girl, Interrupted" (1999). ♦ June 28 at 8:30: "Identity" (2003). ♦ June 29 at 5: "Kate and Leopold" (2001). ♦ June 29 at 7:15: "Walk the Line" (2005). ♦ Films from CalArts. June 28 at 6: "Forevermore: Biography of a Leach Lord" (1989, Eric Saks) and "Diesel Mama" (1973, James Hart and Peter Beckman). ♦ The films of Vittorio De Seta. All films are in Italian. June 28 at 8: Ten documentary short films (1954-59). ♦ June 29 at 6: "Bandits of Orgosolo" (1961). ♦ June 29 at 8: "Half a Man" (1966). ♦ June 30 at 6: "Diary of a Schoolteacher" (1973). ♦ June 30 at 8:30: "In Calabria" (1993). ♦ Through July 12: "Janet Gaynor: A Centennial Celebration." July 1 at 1: "The Shamrock Handicap" (1926, John Ford; silent), "Pep of the Lazy J" (1926, Victor Noerdlinger; silent), and "The Johnstown Flood" (1926, Irving Cummings; silent). ♦ July 1 at 4: "Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans" (1927, F. W. Murnau; silent). ♦ July 1 at 6: "7th Heaven" (1927, Frank Borzage; silent). ♦ July 1 at 8:15: "Street Angel" (1928, Borzage; silent). ♦ July 2 at 1:30: "Lucky Star" (†). ♦ July 2 at 3:30: "Delicious" (1931, David Butler). ♦ July 2 at 5:30: "Tess of the Storm Country" (1932, Alfred Santell). ♦ July 3 at 4: "Adorable" (1933, William Dieterle). ♦ July 3 at 6: "State Fair" (1933, Henry King). ♦ July 3 at 8: "Servants' Entrance" (1934, Frank Lloyd). ♦ "Dada on Film." July 1 at 1: Short silent films, including "Entr'acte" (1924, René Clair). ♦ Through Aug. 17: Recent acquisitions and restorations. July 1 at 3 and July 3 at 8:30: "The Straight Story" (1999, David Lynch). ♦ July 1 at 5:30: "The Band Wagon" (1953, Vincente Minnelli). ♦ July 1 at 8:15 and July 3 at 6:30: "Real Women Have Curves" (2002, Patricia Cardoso). ♦ July 2 at 2 and July 3 at 4:30: "Monsters, Inc." (2001, Pete Docter). ♦ July 2 at 4:30: "My Neighbors the Yamadas" (1999, Isao Takahata; in Japanese).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Independence World Cinema Showcase." June 28-29 at 1:30 and June 30-July 2 at 7:30: "The Forsaken Land" (2005, Vimukthi Jayasundara; in Sinhala). ♦ Through July 9: The films of Stanley Kubrick. July 1-2 at 1:30: "A Clockwork Orange" (1971). ♦ July 1-2 at 4: "Barry Lyndon" (1975).

PIONEER THEATRE
155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Special screenings. June 28 at 7, June 29-30 at 9, July 1 at 7:15 and 9, and July 2-4 at 9: "Room" (2005, Kyle Henry). ♦ June 28 at 9: "The Garden of Earthly Delights" (2004, Lech Majewski). ♦ June 29 at 7: "The Whole Town's Talking" (1935, John Ford). ♦ June 30 at 7: "Going Under" (2004, Eric Werthman). ♦ June 30 at 11: "Showgirls" (1995, Paul Verhoeven).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Special screening. June 29 at 7: "Cleophas and His Own" (2005,

TABLES FOR TWO

PRE:POST

547 W. 27th St. (212-695-7270)—Even before the meatpacking district became hell, there was a respite from it, at Florent, the regenerative twenty-four-hour bistro. Not so in West Chelsea, the night-club vortex up the avenue, where the right kind of late-night chow has long been scarce as silence. Such, anyway, is the theory, or one of the theories, behind Pre:Post, a new dusk-to-dawn restaurant where the slick kids are encouraged to gather and dine before and after their submersion into the clubs down the block. Like a lock-in/lock-out chamber in a submarine, it provides a transition from one environment to the other, containing elements both of club life (subwoofers, private "cabanas," hotties) and life outside (windows, nourishment, affordable alcohol). Incongruities abound: the cabanas in back are glassed in, like squash courts, whereas the booths in front are phony log cabins made out of birch, and the tables are sheathed in white rubber—perhaps to make them spill- and snort-proof.

There are two menus; the switch happens at midnight, when the place is suddenly all but empty. The "pre" period, which peaks at around eleven and suits the sybarite better than it does the claustrophobe, features the usual semi-fancy *fin-de-millénaire* fare—braised short ribs, sesame-crusted tuna, yada yada. It's in the "post" phase, in the wee hours, that the place shows its stuff. The menu seems, sensibly, to have been devised for, if not by, someone on the tail end of an epic bender. There are burgers, baby-back ribs, passable pizzas (with toppings like Peking duck), and, for the grease-averse or conspicuously unhungry, handsome platters of steamed veggies. The most luscious thing, believe it or not, may well be the chicken pita sandwich with chipotle mayo, onions, and bacon.

There are specialty drinks, of course, and they are named after night clubs. The Crobar, which contains tequila, jalapeño, cilantro, and some other tangy things, has a pleasing peppery bite. The Marquee (vodka, cucumber, dill, etc.) tastes like medicine; its namesake may want to pull a Larry David and lobby for a swap with the Bungalow 8 (Baileys, muddled almonds, and so on). There is also a drink called the Take Me Home and another called the Take Me to Bed, designed, apparently, to make you feel like an ass twice over, first for uttering the words and then for sipping something so disagreeably sweet. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays 5 P.M. to 5 A.M. Entrées $10-$32.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

Michael Maglaras.) ♦ "Sunshine@Midnight." June 30-July 1: "Waking Life" (2001, Richard Linklater).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. July 1-2 at 2: "Scarface" (1983, Brian De Palma). ♦ July 1-2 at 5: "Goodfellas" (1990, Martin Scorsese). ♦ July 1-2 at 7:45: "Casino" (1995, Scorsese).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through July 11: The films of Benoît Jacquot. Except where noted, all films are in French. June 28 at 2:30 and 6:30 and June 30 at 5 and 9:15: "Marianne" (1997). ♦ June 28 at 4:30 and 8:30 and June 29 at 2: "The False Servant" (1999). ♦ June 29 at 4 and 9 and June 30 at 2:45 and 7: "The School of Flesh" (1998). ♦ July 1 at 2 and 6:30 and July 3 at 1: "Alfred Deller: Portrait of a Voice" (1976; in English) and "Merce Cunningham and Co." (1982; in English). ♦ July 1 at 4:15 and 8:45: "Elvire-Jouvet 40" (1986) and "Louis René des Forêts" (1988). ♦ July 2 at 2:15 and July 3 at 7: "Jacques Lacan's Psychoanalysis, Part One" (†) and "Numbers and Neurons" (1990). ♦ July 2 at 4:15: "Écrire" (1993) and "The Death of the Young English Aviator" (1993). ♦ July 2 at 6 and July 3 at 3:15: "Princess Marie" (2003). ♦ July 3 at 9 and July 4 at 1:30 and 6: "Tosca" (2001; in Italian). ♦ July 4 at 4 and 8:30: "Sade" (2000). ♦ "Independents Night." June 29 at 6:30: "The Holy Modal Rounders . . . Bound to Lose" (2006, Sam Wainwright Douglas and Paul Lovelace).

READINGS AND TALKS

"WORD FOR WORD"
The reading series in Bryant Park welcomes the mystery writers Cynthia Baxter, Carol Goodman, Laura Lippman, Sandra Scoppettone, and Gammy L. Singer, who will talk about their work. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. For more information, call 212-803-5890. June 28 at 12:30.)

HOUSING WORKS BOOKSTORE CAFÉ
Stephen Gyllenhaal, a poet (and the father of the actors Jake and Maggie), joins the novelist Mary Gordon for a reading. (126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary. June 28 at 7.)

"FROM JOURNO TO BIG BOOK"
Five authors—Sebastian Junger, David Margolick, Julian Rubinstein, Shari Goldhagen, and Tom Zoellner—discuss the transition from meeting daily and monthly deadlines to making the rounds on the book-tour circuit. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St., at Broome St. For more information, call 212-929-2588. June 28 at 7.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Joan Didion reads from "The Year of Magical Thinking," her account of the ultimately fatal illness of her daughter, Quintana, and the death of her husband, John Gregory Dunne. After the reading, she will be interviewed by Philip Gourevitch, the editor of *The Paris Review* and a contributor to this magazine. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. For more information, call 212-360-2777. June 30 at 7:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

MACY'S 4TH OF JULY FIREWORKS
A tradition that started with the country's bicentennial continues with what promises to be another stunning pyrotechnic display. Barges will assume their customary place in the East River, from approximately Forty-second Street to Twenty-third Street. There will also be a barge near the South Street Seaport, and, harkening back to the first celebration, one will be stationed between Ellis and Liberty Islands. The firing begins at about 9:20, at a rate of more than a thousand shots per minute, and continues for half an hour. (For more information, call 212-494-4495.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
It is a testament to the enduring power of Martin Luther King, Jr.,'s legacy to the United States that the upcoming sale of the King estate's collection of the civil-rights leader's manuscripts, papers, and books—which for almost four decades was stored in the home of his widow, the late Coretta Scott King—has whipped up such a storm of controversy. The collection, to be offered as a single lot at **Sotheby's** on June 30, includes drafts of King's "I Have a Dream" speech and his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," a passionate defense of civil disobedience, along with manuscripts of both his Nobel Prize lecture and his acceptance speech and correspondence from such figures as Robert Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Malcolm X. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) ♦ American history also goes on the block at **Christie's**, in a sale of American Indian art (on June 29) that includes two private collections, one of Lakota Sioux artifacts and the other of daily objects and photographs of the Yupik Eskimos in Alaska. Three beautiful, brightly colored masks in the sale represent mythological bird creatures; their long, stylized beaks are hinged, and were manipulated by participants in a Kwakiutl ceremony meant to tame the "Man-Eater Dancer." Also on offer is an extensive collection of photographs of American Indians from the eighteen-seventies by William Henry Jackson, a noted photographer of the American West. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
QUEER AND THERE
July 5-21

"Another Wave: Global Queer Cinema," at MOMA, brings together recent films about gender identity and same-sex love, many made in countries where such subjects remain taboo. The program includes "Bugis Street," from Singapore, "Pangyau," from Malaysia, and "Dakan," from Guinea, as well as Tsai Ming-Liang's "The River" and "Tropical Malady," by the Bangkok-born Apichatpong Weerasethakul. (212-708-9480.)

DANCE
STAGE WORK
July 7-Aug. 11

Central Park's SummerStage features several notable dance troupes, including Noche Flamenca, Stephen Petronio Company (performing with the Young People's Chorus of New York), and Limón Dance Company. (212-360-2777.)

NIGHT LIFE
ALL MIXED UP
Aug. 19

"Amsterjam," the summer concert that brings together musicians from a variety of genres—for solo performances and for onstage "mash-ups"—returns to Randall's Island. The headliners include Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, the Foo Fighters, LL Cool J, and Yerba Buena. (212-307-7171.)

ART
FACTORY FAMILY
July 6

The Whitney adjunct curator Callie Angell recently completed a catalogue raisonné of Andy Warhol's "screen tests"—short black-and-white filmed portraits of his friends and acquaintances. For this evening program, she introduces a series of the works, including films of Susan Sontag, Harry Smith, and Jane Holzer. (800-944-8639.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
FEE FI FO FUM
July 11, 13, and 15-16

"Grendel," Julie Taymor's ambitious opera based on John Gardner's treatment of the Beowulf legend, opened in Los Angeles to mixed reviews—which only makes its New York première, at the Lincoln Center Festival, all the more enticing. (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500.)

"Grendel," at the Lincoln Center Festival.

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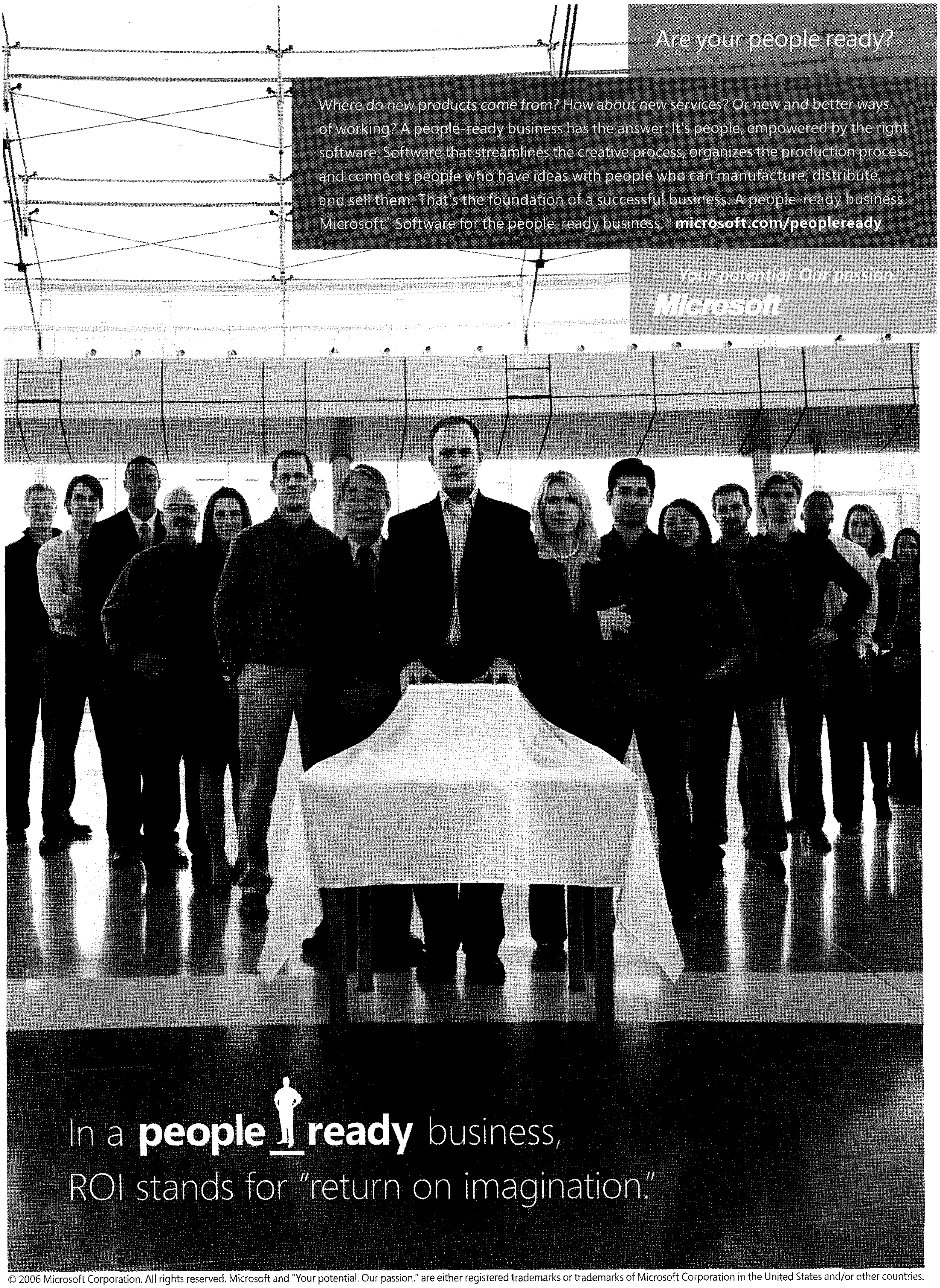

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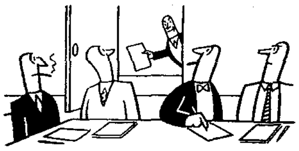
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
FOR WHICH IT STANDS

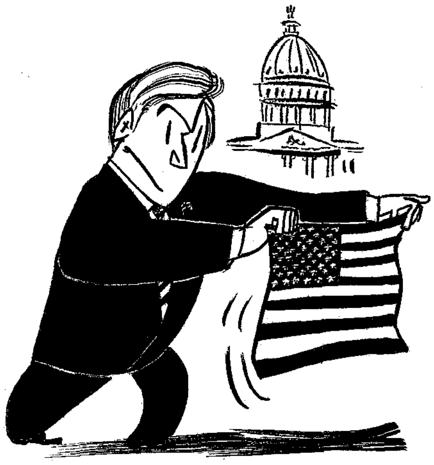


Thanks to Justice Brandeis (who lifted the phrase from Lord Bryce, the British scholar-diplomat and author of "The American Commonwealth"), the legislatures of the several states are often styled, not least by their own members, "laboratories of democracy." And so they are, sometimes, along with also being, sometimes, cockpits of corruption and lairs of lassitude. If, however, a coalition of political panderers, muddleheaded patriots, constitutional defeatists, and outright cynics has its way in the United States Senate this week, the state legislatures will have to take on an additional role: lifeguards of liberty.

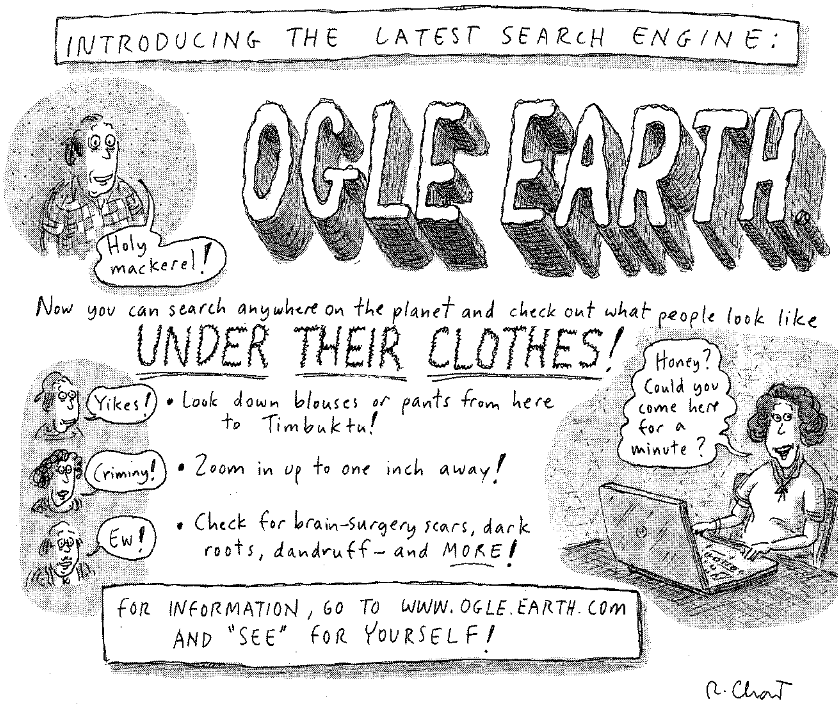
On June 22, 2005, without much fanfare, the House of Representatives passed a resolution "Proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." This was part of a distasteful but, up to now, ultimately harmless biennial political ritual that has been going on ever since the Republican Party took control of the House eleven years ago. The ritual goes like this: In every odd-numbered year (1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2005), sometime around Flag Day or the Fourth of July, the House O.K.'s a constitutional amendment purporting to protect the American flag from the menace of burners, stompers, ripper-uppers, and suchlike miscreants. Later, the amendment dies in the Senate, either quietly, without a vote, or noisily, with one. This is going to be one of the noisy years. The difference this time is that the amendment may not die.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Like a dot-com I.P.O., flag mania reached its peak in the House on Day One: 1995's version of the amendment got three hundred and twelve votes, with a hundred and twenty opposed. Over time, House support has drifted slowly southward. The current version won the backing of two hundred and eighty-six representatives, a record low, while a hundred and thirty voted "nay," a record high. The other slope of Capitol Hill is another story. The last time the amendment reached the floor of the Senate, during the run-up to the 2000 election, it got sixty-three votes, four short of the needed two-thirds. This time, according to vote counters on both sides, sixty-six votes are a lock. If a sixty-seventh can be scrounged up—or if one of the opposing senators doesn't show—then the only remaining obstacle will be winning the approval of three-quarters of the state legislatures. The catch is that all fifty have passed resolutions endorsing just such an amendment. The resolutions are non-binding, but thirteen legislatures would have to summon the strength of character to walk away from them in order to keep this sad little campaign talking point from becoming forevermore part of the Constitution.



The proposed amendment is a one-liner, though lacking in comic punch. It goes, "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." Now, really—is that so terrible? It doesn't even prohibit flag burning, it just authorizes Congress to pass a law prohibiting it. As opponents point out, that would put the United States in the company of China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, pre-invasion Iraq, and other tyrannies. But it turns out that France, Germany, Italy, and India, all of which are reasonably free countries, also have laws against insulting their national ensigns. (Japan, Norway, and—cartoons notwithstanding—polite little Denmark forbid the burning of foreign flags but not their own.) The flag-desecration amendment would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• •

hardly mean the death of free expression in America. And, at a time when our government regards itself as empowered to abuse prisoners with impunity and monitor telephone calls without a warrant, protecting the right of a few (mostly conjectural) protesters to engage in one particular, narrow form of political guerrilla theatre (while retaining the right to say or write whatever they please) may not seem the highest of civil-liberties priorities. Yet the prospect of our Constitution being altered in this way is almost unutterably dispiriting. Part of why that is so may be suggested by one of the amendment's seventeen words, "desecration."

The American flag is an abstraction, an idea expressed in a certain arrangement of colors and shapes. Any particular flag is merely a representation of that idea; and the idea of the flag, in turn, is a symbol of something else. That something else is certainly not the government of the day; nor is it, at bottom, the land or the nation, or even the people. It is, again, an idea—the idea of liberty, made real by institutional arrangements that protect the freedom of citizens to think and speak as they will. Liberty, which is a big idea, protects itself by protecting the expression (though not, of course, guaranteeing the triumph) of other, smaller ideas, good and bad. And the idea of liberty is embodied in the Constitution.

"Desecration" is a word foreign to the vocabulary of that fiercely secular document, whose only references to religion are in its stern proscriptions of any religious test for public office and any government establishment of, or infringement upon, religious practice. Still, almost all Americans, whatever their religious beliefs or lack thereof, would probably agree that both the flag and the Constitution have a certain sacred character. Most would probably agree on a hierarchy of sacredness that places the flag below the Constitution, and the Constitution's instrumental passages—those dealing with the mechanics of government—below the Bill of Rights. If the proposed amendment is adopted, it will be the first time that the First Amendment, which is the Constitution's crowning glory, has itself been amended—and to constrict it, not expand it.

The flag is not a piece of cloth, any more than the Constitution is a piece of paper; and the flag's sacredness is not damaged when a piece of cloth representing it is burned or trampled or used as an autograph book, any more than the Constitution can be damaged by the destruction of a printed copy. But the Constitution can and would be damaged, to the nation's shame, by the addition of something as inimical to its spirit as the flag-desecration amendment. One may safely assume that most of the sixty-six senators—fifty-two Republicans and fourteen Democrats—who at this writing are listed as supporting the amendment do not seriously regard it as a good, let alone a necessary, idea. Its Republican supporters intend to use it aggressively while its Democratic supporters intend to use it defensively, but for both the support is a by-product of negative campaigning. (Intellectual corruption, like the venal variety, is no stranger to either party, even if, in the present era, both varieties are more common among Republicans.) "Providence," Lord Bryce, the laboratories-of-democracy chap, once remarked, "has under its special care children, idiots, and the United States of America." The kids are still all right, but unless thirty-four senators hold firm Providence may no longer be able to indulge the second without harming the third.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

RELICS
A BROADWAY HAUNT

In 1987, the Landmarks Preservation Commission proclaimed the Belasco Theatre, on West Forty-fourth Street, to be worthy of its protection, partly on the basis of the theatre's interior being "one which is customarily open and accessible to the public." Unmentioned in this designation, and consigned to different categories of limbo, were (a) a pair of ghosts, said to have haunted the place for decades, and (b) a ten-room duplex that the impresario David Belasco had built above his theatre in 1909. (He died in 1931.) The Belasco apartment, as it is called, in those rare instances when it is called anything at all, has been more or less vacant for seventy-five years, gradually being stripped of its contents, while remaining anything but open and accessible to the public. The door is almost always locked.

One of the ghosts is said to be Belasco's. The other is that of a showgirl who died when she fell into an elevator shaft backstage. Belasco's wears a clerical collar (as did the man), and the showgirl's wears a blue dress. To appease her, or it, every production at the theatre is supposed to feature at least one actress so costumed. In "Awake and Sing!," the Clifford Odets revival that finished its run at the Belasco last week, that role belonged to Zoë Wanamaker.

The last big sighting of Belasco's ghost occurred at a performance of "Oh! Calcutta!" in 1972; in the middle of the show, it left its customary seat, in the balcony. The presumption was that it had been offended by the play's salaciousness, but this hardly seems likely, since Belasco, in life, was, among many other things, a legendary hound. Technically, he was married, but his apartment was the city's supreme bachelor pad, configured and employed for the seduction of leading and not-so-leading ladies. An elevator took the girls straight up from backstage to a watery vestibule called the Grotto (this was before Hugh Hefner was even *born*). They passed into an ornate study, where the Bishop of Broadway, as he was known, awaited them, in clerical dress. The pornography was hidden behind sliding panels in the wainscoting of the bedroom upstairs.

Talk of this place, and word that members of the Odets cast had been sneaking into it, awoke a certain kind of neighborhood curiosity, and after weeks of negotiations with the Shubert Organization, which owns the theatre, a tour by flashlight was arranged. One of the guides was Pablo Schreiber—Ralph in the play—who said, at the outset, "Officially? None of us have been up there." The first stop, up a set of stairs, was Belasco's old offices, a warren of ruined empty rooms with paint so distressed that it looked like mold. According to signs on doors, several offices had belonged to an enterprise called the American Model Agency—*nice*. Flashlight beams revealed the names and sentiments of previous visitors, etched in the dust on various glass surfaces: "Jo Anne Worley '89"; "Love is the greatest thing of all."

"Wait until you see the steam room," Schreiber said.

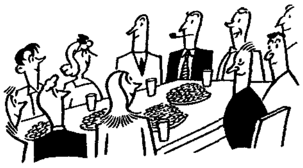
The duplex was upstairs. A climb past an air-conditioning duct revealed a husk of a home, less love nest than crack house. Belasco's bizarre collection of loot—a pew from Shakespeare's church, a lock of Napoleon's hair, a peerless theatrical library—was long gone (auctioned, stolen, stored, or transported to Sardi's), but in the gloom and soot you could still make out old panelled cupboards and Gothic-arched slots in the wood panelling, where relics, real and fake, used to be displayed. In the study stood an open-faced confession booth. "He used to play the bishop here and have his chorus girls confess to him," Schreiber said. (A subsequent call to the Shubert Archive revealed that this was not the case. It had probably been Belasco's phone booth. As for Schreiber's steam room, it was just the Grotto. "I think it had a waterfall," the archivist said, "or some water-treatment kind of thing"—*hello, ladies!*—"considered to be elegant at the time.")

"Great tile work," Schreiber said, indicating a giant fireplace in the study. The tiles had been stolen from the Alhambra, in Spain. There was a lifesize cardboard cutout of Bela Lugosi on the balustrade above, a remnant of a visit from a cast member of "Dracula, the Musical," a recent Belasco show; there was also a life mask of Tom Hewitt, the show's star, on the mantel. Here and there was a packet of Saltines, or a crushed coffee cup, or an empty box of Garcia Vegas. If there had been a bachelor in this place, in the intervening decades, he seemed not to have been too suave of one.

In a mirrored cabinet, in one room, someone had scrawled four words, one per shelf: "Nasty." "Olan." "Lizard." "Fib." Schreiber had no theory for it. He made his way downstairs. It was time to be Ralph.

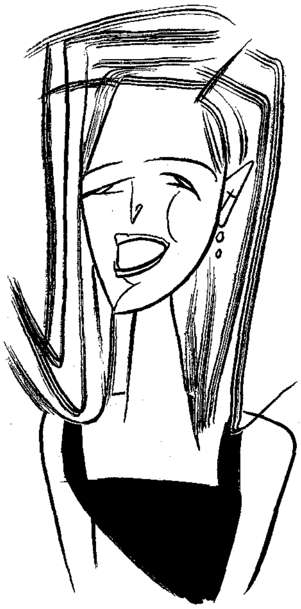
—*Nick Paumgarten*

DEPT. OF HOOPLA
HISTORY GIRLS



Susan Schulz is the editor-in-chief of *CosmoGirl*, which she describes as the magazine for "the generation that is born to lead." If such a characterization does raise a logistical question—when everyone is a leader, who is to be led?—the spirit behind the sentiment was not lost on Schulz's guests at a lunch that was held at the Four Seasons restaurant the other day, in honor of Karenna Gore Schiff. Schiff, who used to be the daughter of the next President of the United States, is the author of a new book titled "Lighting the Way," which tells the story of nine women who changed the course of American history without ever gaining elective office. It was Schulz's ambitious hope that her guest list might bear comparison with Schiff's contents page, because, she said, "I, or Karenna, or some other people here could potentially be one of those people who would be looked back on and said, 'Wow, they really did something.' "

Although *CosmoGirl* is not most people's idea of a magazine of ideas—the latest issue apprises readers of how they might "get Jen's arms" and "get Beyoncé's butt"—the distance between its preoccupations and the wider political discourse is not as great as might sometimes be hoped. (On page 76, in a Q.&A. with the pop star Nick Lachey, a variation on an all too familiar question is asked: "Boxers, briefs, or boxer-briefs?") Schiff, who is as pretty as the twins who supplanted her and her sisters as the nation's First Daughters and as brainy as the beleaguered First Daughter who preceded them, admitted that she was not especially familiar with the publication. "I am not a regular reader, but I do have respect for their reach," she said, demonstrating the political



Karenna Gore Schiff

adeptness that might be expected of one whose earliest memory is of being onstage when her father won his first congressional race, an event that happened to fall on her third birthday, prompting the crowd to sing to her.

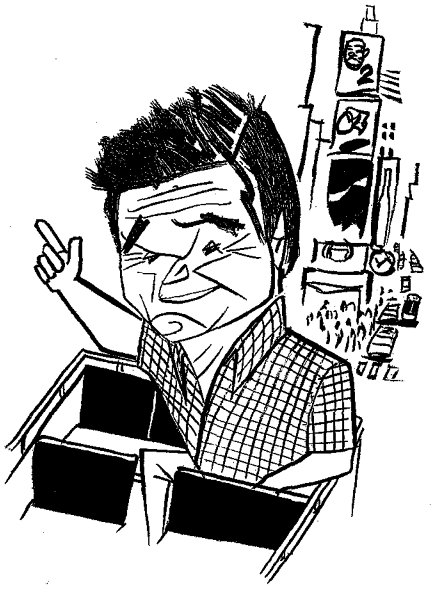
Other guests were equally well connected. There was Silda Wall, the wife of Eliot Spitzer, who is also the founder of Children for Children, a nonprofit organization in New York that encourages volunteerism among children; and Justin Rockefeller, the son of Senator Jay Rockefeller and a founder of Generation Engage, a group that encourages political activity among young people who are not college-bound. Schiff moved with grace among the guests, whose interests seemed often to be just one step ahead of her own. "I don't know much about fashion, but I would like to know more," she told Eric Gaskins, a fashion designer who was regaling her with tales from the runway.

After the steamed asparagus and the crab cakes had been served, and as the strawberry shortcake sat untouched on dessert plates, Schulz tapped on her glass with a fork—"I've always wanted to do that," she said. "I would like to ask Alek Wek about Sudan," Schiff said to Wek, who was a refugee before becoming a supermodel, and whose projects range from those typically associated with women's magazines—she has designed a line of handbags—to those more commonly featured in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*. Wek explained that she has travelled to Sudan with the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and has established her own foundation, called, with acronymic aptness, Working to Educate Kids. "It really does take a community to raise a child," Wek told Schiff earnestly, perhaps unwittingly invoking the presence of the woman most likely to deprive Schiff of another shot at First Daughterdom. The talk was not all geopolitical, however. Amy Sewell, who produced the movie "Mad Hot Ballroom," took the opportunity to pay tribute to Helen Gurley Brown, the octogenarian longtime editor of *Cosmopolitan*, who was also present and was gamely dressed in a very short Chanel suit and a lashing of brick-red lipstick. "I want to tell you that I have a very happy marriage because of you," Sewell said; and Brown, whose magazine might in its heyday have been characterized as being for the generation born to get laid, gave the smile of one whose place in American history is unassailable.

—*Rebecca Mead*

I'M WITH STUPID DEPT.
FRED WILLARD, TOURIST

Fred Willard has long put his hearty, game-show-host manner to use playing characters who are gloriously out of their depth. Willard improvises his lines, spouting poppycock with absolute self-assurance; in the film "Best in Show" his character, a dog-show announcer, muses about a miniature schnauzer, "You'd think they'd want to breed 'em bigger, wouldn't you? Like grapefruits or watermelons." Christopher Guest, the writer-director of "Best in Show," as well as the Willard showcases "Waiting for Guffman" and "A Mighty Wind," has observed that "Fred has the patent on characters who are comfortable in their stupidity." Away from the cameras, however, Willard is a scholar of vanished luminescence. He pores over photos of bygone buildings and makes pilgrimages to places like the intersection near Bakersfield where James Dean's Porsche got rammed and the motel in South Los Angeles where Sam Cooke was shot.



Fred Willard

One morning recently, Willard, in town from Los Angeles, had a few hours free before a rehearsal (he is starring as an Elvis impersonator in "Elvis and Juliet," written by his wife, Mary, at the Abingdon Theatre). So he boarded a Gray Line bus at Forty-seventh and Eighth for a city tour. Willard and his wife lived in Manhattan in the early nineteen-seventies—"Our daughter was born in the old French Hospital, where Babe Ruth spent some of his last days," he recalled—and he was curious to compare the metropolis today with his memories. Sitting on the bus's open upper deck, wearing chinos and a checked shirt, the sixty-six-year-old actor listened attentively as the guide, a small Japanese-American woman shaded by a large black sun hat, drew everyone's attention to the first attraction: the Gray Line offices across the street. Willard confided, "Used to be a gay porno theatre, by the way."

As the sightseeing continued—Columbus Circle, Lincoln Center, etc.—Willard kept up a murmured alternative commentary, pointing out the block where Jack Dempsey's restaurant used to be, the apartment building where Arnold Rothstein fixed the 1919 World Series, the hotel where the gangster Albert Anastasia was gunned down in a barber's chair.

As the bus drove down West Seventy-second Street, past the Dakota, where John Lennon was killed, Willard looked away: "It's too recent, like O.J.'s house." Peering into Central Park, he continued, "I wonder how long it'll be before they start building in there. Just one little restaurant. Then a gift shop. That's how it starts."

Near Columbia University, Willard made note of where Lou Gehrig used to play ball, adding, "I once went up on Coogan's Bluff, and this very gangster guy comes over and says, 'What are you doing?' He was probably dealing drugs, and worried that I was a plainclothesman, and there I was showing him this photo of the Polo Grounds and asking where it had been."

In Harlem, the guide explained that black people's hair was different and that they all went to church in their good clothes, whereas everyone else in the city was too busy to be religious, especially the Jews. Back in midtown, she pointed out two famous "Jewish delicatessens," the Carnegie and the Stage. "Lots of remarks about Jews and blacks," Willard observed, "yet we haven't even *mentioned* Pearl Harbor."

"A few years ago," he said, after a moment, "I was in Cleveland, where I grew up, and I looked up my dad's death certificate at City Hall. I was twelve when he died, in 1951. He died after dropping off Christmas gifts to a customer—he worked at a financing company, it was all a little vague. They said he usually turned to wave after he got in his car, and this time he didn't. Heart failure. I went down to the intersection listed on the certificate, a Buick dealership, and it was very touching. He was Fred Willard, and I was Fred Willard. He was a pretty stern guy, though. I don't remember much joking, never much encouragement. My wife hates all these visits, going to see the graves. 'The people aren't *there!*' she says. And I say, 'But this is the closest we can get to them.'" He gazed out at Times Square, perhaps seeing past the JumboTron dazzle to the Tenderloin of decades past. "If it was up to me, nothing would ever change, no one would ever die. On the other hand," he added, "then no one could have babies, either, because it would get too crowded."

—*Tad Friend*

POSTSCRIPT
BARBARA EPSTEIN

American magazines, including this one, do not begin fully formed. They start out, depending on the times, with high spirits or with a stern sense of mission, but the idea itself, the complete set of ingredients that might make a magazine distinctive enough to last—that's almost never in place. And yet when *The New York Review of Books* made its début—Volume 1, No. 1, dated February 1, 1963, appeared in the midst of a four-month-long printers' strike at the *Times*—the idea for an intellectually vigorous books magazine was so perfectly cooked, and its founding editors, Barbara Epstein and Robert Silvers, so skilled and connected, that an extended family of friends and sympathizers rushed to fill the chairs at a vast table of contents. The poets Auden and Warren, Lowell and Berryman were there; Dwight MacDonald, Irving Howe, Philip Rahv, Susan Sontag, Alfred Kazin, and F. W. Dupee were among the critics; Elizabeth Hardwick, William Styron, Mary McCarthy, and Norman Mailer all set fiction aside for the moment and wrote essays. And that's only the half of it. The result was surely the best first issue of any magazine ever.

Epstein and Silvers, who were then in their mid-thirties, never wrote for their own magazine, except ceremonially. But their sense of mission did not lack for ambition, or even ego; their editors' note in the first issue said that the *Review*, if it ever took off, would not bother to write about books "trivial in their intentions or venal in their effects, except occasionally to reduce a temporarily inflated reputation or to call attention to a fraud." None of the writers got paid for their efforts, the editors announced; Volume 1, No. 1 was really just an experiment "to discover whether there is, in America, not only the need for such a review but the demand for one."

The *Times* soon returned, of course, but, by June, so, too, had the fledgling *Review*, and for forty-three years Epstein and Silvers kept it going at the highest level.

"The whole thing was so Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney," Barbara would always say. "A bunch of friends thought it all up at dinner one night and the next thing you know the show was on—forever!"

They really did it all themselves, or nearly so. The two worked in adjoining offices, and, like the fabled Collyer Brothers, they were dwarfed by a perilous cityscape of galleys and manuscripts that always seemed in danger of toppling, and crushing them. Into their seventies, they worked the hours of first-year law students. Any writer hoping to call the main number with the idea of leaving an apologetic voice message on, say, Tuesday at 2 A.M.—"Sorry! But I swear the piece will be in . . . very soon!"—would more than likely get Bob ("*New York Review!*") or Barbara ("Um-m-m . . . ye-es-s-s?").

Barbara used to call the office a kind of "ma-and-pa operation," and that was true even after the sale of the paper to a benevolent Mississippian, Rea Hederman, in 1984. (Barbara always called it that—"the paper"—as if a biweekly featuring, say, Isaiah Berlin on the origins of Fascism, Murray Kempton on Mussolini, and Joan Didion on the Unabomber were no less ephemeral than the daily reporting of Cindy Adams.) The rest of the editorial staff, like the court of a small duchy, has always been very loyal and unimaginably small.

Now Silvers, who is seventy-six, will edit the *Review* alone. Barbara Epstein died earlier this month, of lung cancer.

For all the seriousness of Barbara's work, and for all the time she put into it, her friends knew her as perhaps the least self-serious serious person imaginable. Personal warmth and oblique suggestion was her editorial technique. ("This bit," she would say gently, pointing to the weak underbelly of a manuscript. "Well, it's brilliant, of course, but it might be a little broad, do you know?") Her favorite compliment was "divine." In this, she was democratic. Her young writers—and there were many—were divine. The pizza at Orso was divine. Jamba Juice was divine. Fred MacMurray in "Alice Adams" was divine. "The 40-Year-Old Virgin" was divine. She loved a party; she loved gossip and fun. She seemed to know everybody, and once, when a young writer eagerly asked her what a particular celebrity was "really like," she smiled her wicked, pursed smile, lowered her eyelids, and said, "Well, she's a masochist, which is *always* adorable!"

In 1953, Edmund Wilson encountered Barbara while she was on her honeymoon, a transatlantic voyage aboard the Île de France with bottles of champagne supplied by Doubleday, where both Barbara and her husband, Jason Epstein, were editors. As Wilson recounts in his diaries, he (and Buster Keaton) spent a night drinking and dining with the Epsteins. But it wasn't until the sixties, with the rise of the *Review*, Wilson thought, that Barbara, "who before was so quiet and kept herself in the background," came fully into her own.

"I spent a good deal of the time sitting on the stairs with Barbara Epstein," Wilson wrote of a New Year's Eve party at Lillian Hellman's place in 1965. "I have never seen her so vivid, so good-looking and so amusing. The *Review* has done a lot for her."

—*David Remnick*

THE SPORTING SCENE

UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITY

The World Cup and our problem with soccer.

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

On the steps in front of the Brauhaus Hibernia, a cheerful pub on the main square in Gelsenkirchen, a coal town in the Ruhr Valley, one woozy rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" followed another. Captain America was there in full regalia, along with Evel Knievel and a complete starting five of the Harlem Globetrotters, dribbling a basketball—with their feet, of course. The celebrants were among about five hundred American soccer fans, most of them wearing U.S. team jerseys, with the Stars and Stripes tied around their necks as capes. Soccer fans in America are evangelical in their fervor, yet cultish in their number, and a couple of hours before the United States team was to play its opening match in the first round of this year's World Cup tournament, their creed was being repeated and reaffirmed: *Soccer in America is growing. Our team is a genuine world power. We made the quarter-finals last time, so this year, just maybe*...

Over the alcoholic din, Nathaniel Max, from Riverside, California, recalled his trip to the World Cup in France, eight years ago. "All the fans from opposing teams wanted to take pictures of me," he said. "It was like, 'Look! An American soccer fan! Never seen one of them before!' This scene tells you how much things have changed."

The quality of the American team, however, still ranks with the quantity of its fans—that is, at best, in the middle of the international pack. Not six minutes into the game in Gelsenkirchen, Zdenek Grygera, of the Czech Republic, fired a cross in front of the American goal. The ball flew high and hard toward Jan Koller, the Czech striker, who resembles no American athlete. There are basketball players as tall as Koller (he is six feet seven inches), football players with backs as broad, professional wrestlers with heads as bald. But no one has quite the same combination of graceful athleticism and lurid menace, and certainly no one looks so much like Lurch, from "The Addams Family." With a couple of American defenders standing beside him like an honor guard, Koller leaned in for a header. The dull thud of his head crashing into the ball suggested a sandbag hitting a dam. It was, perhaps, a good thing that Kasey Keller, the American goalkeeper, just grazed the ball—its full impact might have hurt him. By the ten-minute mark of the game, the Czech fans were making the universal sign of spectator boredom: the wave. The Czech players, bigger, stronger, and faster than the Americans, controlled the entire game, and the final score, 3–0, was one of the worst defeats suffered by any team in the first round of the tournament.

Five days later, the U.S. team salvaged a measure of respectability in a madcap 1–1 tie with Italy. Then, last Thursday, a clearly superior team from Ghana beat the United States 2–1, condemning the Americans to last place in their four-team group. In all, the World Cup in 2006 suggested another false dawn for soccer in America. The game that captivates the rest of world—where it is a source of rapture and revenue—remains only a niche product at home. Even a better performance at the Cup probably would not have altered the sport's trajectory much. Soccer is the Canada of American sports, viewed less with contempt than with indifference.

In early June, my thirteen-year-old son, Adam, and I flew to Frankfurt for the start of the games. This was supposed to be the dodgiest of the twelve venues in Germany, because the English team, accompanied by its notoriously loutish fans, would be playing its first game there, against Paraguay. In every participating city, the German organizers put on what they called a Fan Fest for the thousands of locals and visitors

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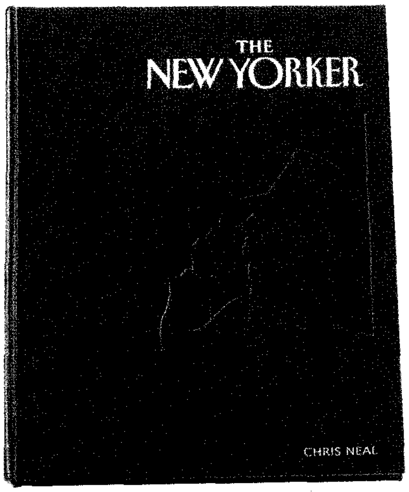

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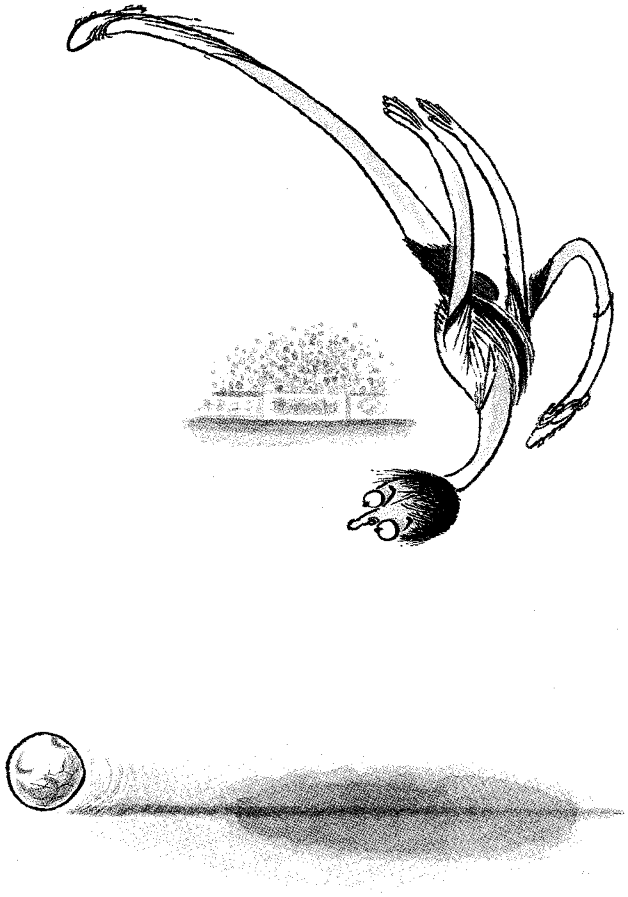
who couldn't get tickets to the games. The English visitors, with their alleged tendency to riot, were perhaps, in the eyes of their highly organized hosts, most in need of diversionary Fan Festing. The Fest in Frankfurt was surely the most spectacular of the Teutonic sideshows: it featured giant double-sided video screens on stilts in the middle of the Main River. Tens of thousands lined the banks to watch England try to recapture its former glory.

In the years since the English team won its only Cup, in 1966, its supporters have come to resemble Red Sox fans circa 2003, in their amazing ability to conjure, then experience, scenarios of doom and the resultant self-pity. Perhaps that's why they drink so much. There were said to be forty thousand English fans, mostly men, in the crowd along the Main—far more than from any other country—and most of them came supplied with cases of lager and stout. (They didn't wait for kickoff to start drinking, either.) England survived its opener, 1–0, thanks to a brilliant free kick by David Beckham that nicked a Paraguayan defender and slipped into the goal. Beckham's celebrity has come almost to obscure his greatness as a player, most notably his extraordinary gifts as a passer. Beckham also set up the winning goal in England's second game, sending a perfect cross to Peter Crouch, an underfed Jan Koller, putting the team ahead of Trinidad and Tobago in the eighty-third minute.



Soccer in America can't quite transcend its suburban roots.

ARNOLD ROTH

The real test for the English fans, and for their German minders from the *Polizei* (as well as about eighty police officers on loan from the English authorities), came after the game, when the risk of hooliganism is supposedly greatest. England wisely banned more than three thousand known hooligans from travelling to Germany, and the precaution paid off. The fans who made the trip turned out to be as docile as they were drunk, and they settled for episodic naughtiness. In the bars of the Römberg, the old town square, which is surrounded by replicas of medieval houses, the Brits serenaded their hosts with a ditty called "Ten German Bombers." It was sung to the tune of "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain," and each verse concluded: "And the R.A.F. from England shot one down!" The local cops laughed, at least through the first dozen rounds. The only tense moment occurred the next day, when some boisterous Englishmen came upon a group of Iranian fans on the vast pedestrian mall known as the Zeil. The Iranians, in order to salve the wounds of a 3–1 loss to Mexico, were dancing to a scratchy tape of a woman singing in Farsi. The English knew that they weren't supposed to like the Iranians, but German Pilsner had dulled their geopolitical instincts. "Fuck the I.R.A.!" they chanted at the baffled Persians.

In the first weeks of the Cup, England and Germany found common ground on the subject of the WAGs—that is, the wives and girlfriends of the English players. As the team's members struggled against weak opposition to advance out of the first round, their significant others cut a sybaritic swath through Germany, using the spa town of Baden-Baden as a base for exploring the boutiques and bars of the host country. There was, for example, a postprandial visit to a night spot in Baden-Baden called Garibaldi, where four WAGs "ordered £270 worth of Moët & Chandon champagne, nine vodka and Red Bulls and assorted sambucas, Bacardis and lagers, and danced the night away," according to the *Daily Mail*, "with a total bar bill of £450"—about eight hundred and twenty dollars. (The so-called Queen of the WAGs, Victoria Beckham, the former Posh Spice, who is said to have brought sixty pairs of sunglasses to Germany, skipped the outing to Garibaldi.) "They have the stamina and spending power that showed England has a team to take on the world—in shopping," the *Daily Telegraph* said of the WAGs. "How can you tell the difference between the species of English women and the majority of German women?" asked the mass-circulation *Bild Zeitung*. "In ten minutes they spend more cash on clothes than ours do in half a lifetime."

It wasn't just a shared taste for catty gossip that drew the former adversaries together; for once, the soccer wasn't driving them apart. In general, a harmless nationalism has prevailed over tribal hatred at this World Cup. (In Marseilles during the 1998 Cup, English fans rampaged for three days, attacking rival fans, throwing bottles, and vandalizing cars and shops.) Germany's red-black-and-gold flag is everywhere, a sign that, six decades after the Second World War, the country is becoming a normal nation. The changing character of German society is also reflected in its national team, which includes a black player, Gerald Asamoah, who was born in Ghana, and two who were born in Poland, Lukas Podolski and Miroslav Klose. (Klose was the top goal-scorer in the first two weeks of the Cup.) "Could it be that the government has realized the old hippie dream and laced our drinking water with LSD?" asked an editorial in *Die Welt*, in response to the outburst of patriotism. According to the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, the support for the team merely reflected a "beautiful sense of normalcy."

The international nature of contemporary soccer has scrambled alliances and contributed to the jolly atmosphere in Germany. Many of the visiting English fans doubtless spend most of their time at home rooting for Chelsea, which is currently the top team in the English Premier League. That polyglot ensemble includes half a dozen stars who, in the Cup, are playing for other teams, among them Petr Cech, of the Czech Republic; Michael Essien, of Ghana; Arjen Robben, of Holland; Didier Drogba, of Ivory Coast; and Hernán Crespo, of Argentina. (Chelsea has a Portuguese coach, José Mourinho, and is owned by a Russian billionaire, Roman Abramovich.) Your hero in May is hard to hate in June. "Everyone's used to foreign players in England now," said Roy Phillips, fifty-five, of Gloucestershire, who was attending the Cup with his son and daughter. "It's not a problem. Everyone just goes where the money is. It's just a new world, innit?"

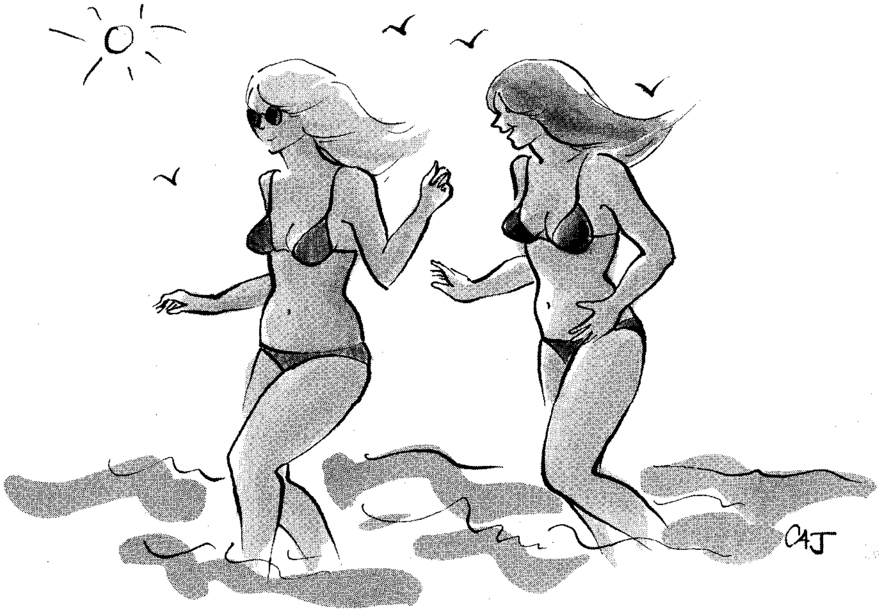
The free market for soccer talent has even affected American players, who can put themselves up for worldwide auction as well. In the buildup to the 2006 tournament, no one on the U.S. squad received more attention than Landon Donovan, who is what passes for a celebrity in the American soccer world. A twenty-four-year-old from the Los Angeles area, Donovan is a fleet midfielder who was the breakout U.S. star during the team's surprising run to the quarterfinals at the 2002 World Cup. He has a contract with Bayer Leverkusen, in Germany's Bundesliga. But, in two stints with the club, Donovan washed out, failing to establish himself as a starter, and he is now on loan to the United States, where he plays in the more congenial and less competitive Major League Soccer.

Donovan, who began playing soccer at the age of five, cultivates a surfer-dude persona. (When I met him earlier this year, at a U.S. team training session outside Los Angeles, his first words to me were "No worries, man.") But his laid-back approach did not go over well in Germany. Even though the Americans qualified with relative ease for the 2006 tournament—a two-year ordeal that reduces about two hundred soccer-playing nations to the thirty-two represented in Germany—the squad has always had trouble scoring goals, and it was Donovan's primary responsibility to put the ball in the net. But against the Czech Republic he was completely ineffective; the team's defenders physically barred his passage anywhere near the goal. Even Bruce Arena, the coach of the U.S. team, who generally speaks in bland nostrums to the press, singled out Donovan after the game, saying, "Landon showed no aggressiveness."

Anyone can have a bad game, but the kind of bad game Donovan and his teammates had against the Czechs—desultory, erratic, clueless—suggested a larger problem for the Americans in international competition. The problem wasn't just a dearth of skill but a lack of mettle. The American players collectively had more World Cup experience than their opponents, but they seemed timid by comparison. The game was an object lesson in what haunts American soccer: the curse of the minivan.

John G. Roberts, Jr., during his confirmation hearings, was asked how, if he became Chief Justice of the United States, he would stay in touch with the concerns of ordinary Americans. Roberts replied that he had two young children and that he would be attending "a lot of soccer games," where he would mix with regular folk. The assertion made perfect sense. Soccer has exploded in popularity in the last few decades: there are now as many as six million Americans under eighteen who play in youth leagues. Among young people, the sport is now second in popularity to basketball. Every kid in the American suburbs, it seems, owns a pair of shin guards. Soccer accords nicely with baby-boomer parents' notions about sports: every kid gets to play, no one stands out too much, there's plenty of running and trophies for all. If the Chief Justice's children are typical, they will play neighborhood soccer for a few years, with enthusiastic but inexperienced parent coaches, and then wander away from the game by adolescence. Good high-school athletes tend to migrate to football and basketball, where they can play in front of big crowds and perhaps qualify for college scholarships. Soccer in the suburbs serves mostly as a bridge between Barney and Nintendo; it's a pleasant diversion, not a means of developing brutes like Jan Koller, to say nothing of the magicians who stock the Brazilian team.

Even so, the growing number of soccer players in the country has certainly improved the level of play in the United States, including that of the national



"I never thought turning eighty would be so much fun!"

team. "Soccer is the only sport with a real championship," Arena told me when I visited the team's training facility, in Carson, California, in February. "We call the Super Bowl a world championship, but that's a joke. Who else plays? The best athletes in every country in the world play soccer. It's the reason our country is best at basketball. It's what our best people do." As we were talking, Eddie Johnson, a leonine striker, was doing his stretching on the ground in front of us. "Look at him," Arena said. "He was a wide receiver at his high school in Florida. Those are the best athletes in the country, and he's with us now. That's a big difference from four years ago—just the quality of the athletes." (Johnson is African-American; soccer is only beginning to make inroads among blacks. Oddly, the national team includes almost no Hispanics, the one ethnic group in America that seems to need no encouragement to love the sport.) "We've finally figured out a system where we can find the best players in the country for the national team," Arena said. "In other countries, the best players would already be affiliated with a top club when they were twelve years old."

In Berlin, I had a chance to see what Arena meant when my son and I visited the city's newest tourist attraction. Adidas, the German company that usually plays the nerdy older brother to Nike in the athletic-footwear wars, had decided to show its clout on home turf by building the World of Football, a fantasyland on a vast plaza in front of the Reichstag. In addition to a ten-thousand-seat replica of the city's Olympic Stadium, where the Cup games were projected on video screens, there were half a dozen artificial-turf pitches for small-squad pickup games and organized tournaments. On the day we were there, Adidas hosted the Berlin lower-school championships, for players under twelve. The kids were local schoolchildren, but the play was fast and highly skilled. The future of soccer in Germany looked secure.

Brazil arrived at this year's Cup the expected winner, as usual. "Look, the World Cup is the same every time," Sunil Gulati, the president of the U.S. Soccer Federation, who is also a Columbia economics professor specializing in international development, said. "Brazil needs, wants, expects to win every World Cup. Everyone else crawls and scratches to get out of the first round, and then sees what happens and if lightning strikes. No one goes in saying, 'We are going to win,' except Brazil." Winners of five Cups, two more than any other country, the Brazilians so dominate international soccer that their iconic yellow-and-green jersey practically serves as a symbol of the sport.

Brazil's first game was against Croatia, and it was held in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. The Cup organizers had arranged for a shimmering new transparent canopy to be built on top of the arena, but, thanks to Leni Riefenstahl, it is still recognizably the home of the 1936 games. It's one of the few positive symbols of those years—the place where Jesse Owens refuted Hitler's theory of Aryan supremacy—yet the concrete oval remains a sombre classic of Fascist architecture. All the better, then, that the stadium was the venue for the tournament's first appearance by Ronaldinho, soccer's presiding genius, who is as well known for his ever-present smile as for his gifts on the pitch. From the first whistle of the opener against Croatia, it was clear that the Brazilian team belonged to him this year, and when he took an early ball down the right side and dribbled around four defenders, it seemed possible that we might be seeing a performance that would elevate Ronaldinho into Brazil's pantheon of World Cup heroes.

It didn't turn out that way. Ronaldinho, who is twenty-six, soon ceased his theatrics and spent the rest of the game steering the ball to his teammates. Brazil managed only a single goal, near the end of the first half: a bullet from the top of the box by Kaká, a midfielder who, in most other countries, would be the best player. Croatia was outclassed, and the team went down 1–0, in a game that was actually a lot less close than the score made it appear.

The real drama of the game was the performance of Ronaldo, the top scorer at the last Cup and Ronaldinho's predecessor as the team's dominant figure. Since 2002, Ronaldo appears to have been following the training regimen associated with such earlier stars as Maradona and George Best (think beer and supermodels), and the pillowing effects on his physique have been as one might expect. The fans at Real Madrid, Ronaldo's club in the Spanish league, now call him El Gordo—the fat guy. Against Croatia, Ronaldo seemed barely able to jog. For most of the game, he stood at the top of the box looking lost, waiting for someone to pass him the ball.

The Brazilian fans are knowledgeable as well as passionate, and before the end of the first half against Croatia they were chanting, "Robinho, Robinho," the name of yet another superstar, even younger than Ronaldinho, who was riding the bench. In the sixty-ninth minute, Coach Carlos Alberto Parreira, yielding to the fans' demands, put Robinho into the game, where he chased balls down in the corners, fed his teammates passes for shots, and provided the Brazilian side with a jolt of energy, if no more goals.

Ronaldo later checked himself in to a Frankfurt clinic, where he was said to be suffering from mysterious symptoms, including dizzy spells. Released five days later, he played better, scoring two goals against Japan last Thursday. Ronaldo's saga would be of little more than casual interest were his prospects, and those of other aging stars, not tied to the future of American soccer.

Earlier this year, the Red Bulls, the New York franchise in Major League Soccer, apparently offered Ronaldo a ten-year contract for around a hundred million dollars, an enormous sum even by the standards of the top European leagues. (All the best players in the world earn their living in Europe, including twenty of the twenty-three players on the Brazil roster.) The deal has not been finalized, however, and media reports suggest that it may be dead, with the Red Bulls looking to sign Beckham instead. Sooner or later, one of the big stars in the European game is likely to wind up playing in America. Such a move would undoubtedly generate tremendous interest and boost ticket sales—but fail as a long-term strategy.

Professional soccer has flourished only fitfully here since the founding of the New York Cosmos, in the early seventies, by the Warner Communications entertainment conglomerate. Steve Ross, the showboating chief executive, advised by Ahmet Ertegun, the music mogul, and Ertegun's brother Nesuhi, decided that America was ready to embrace soccer. From their experience promoting the Rolling Stones, among others, Ross and Ertegun knew that Americans loved superstars, so the Cosmos signed Pelé, the incomparable Brazilian, who was then thirty-four years old and in his dotage as a player. Pelé and the Cosmos began selling out Giants Stadium, with seventy-five thousand seats, and the infant North American Soccer League thrived, at least for a while.

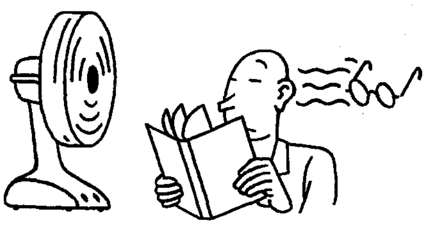
Then, in 1977, just twenty-eight months after he joined the Cosmos, Pelé retired, and the professional game in America seemed to retire with him. The Cosmos had signed other aging world stars, including Franz Beckenbauer and Giorgio Chinaglia, but none of them had Pelé's magic at the box office. The league went bust in 1984, and the experience so traumatized American sports executives that no one tried again for a decade. (The story of the Cosmos' rise and fall is told in "Once in a Lifetime," a new documentary.)

Several soccer-mad Americans, including Henry Kissinger, helped bring the World Cup to the U.S. in 1994. In that tournament, the Americans progressed to the final sixteen for the first time since 1930, but they lost 1–0 to Brazil, the eventual winner; the final was held in the Rose Bowl, in Pasadena. The Cup games drew huge crowds, but they hardly triggered a national groundswell. The Women's World Cup in 1999 produced an American win—and made Mia Hamm the best-known native soccer player—but the women's professional league went out of business in 2001, a victim of insufficient corporate sponsorship and low attendance.

Today, Major League Soccer, which was founded in 1996, is trying to promote the sport by, among other tactics, hiring American college players. (Salaries range from about thirty-five thousand dollars a year to around nine hundred thousand, for stars like Donovan and Johnson.) M.L.S. has survived largely because of Phil Anschutz, the Colorado billionaire and right-wing media mogul, who owns four of the twelve teams and has been willing to subsidize heavy losses. Other owners may prove less patient. Earlier this year, Dietrich Mateschitz, the Austrian soft-drink entrepreneur, bought the New York MetroStars, renamed them the Red Bulls, after his caffeine-laced beverage, and began courting Ronaldo, and possibly Beckham. The arrival of either player could produce a Pelé-style stir, but celebrity hires are not a solution, especially now that cable television and the Internet allow American fans to follow the top European leagues at least as easily as they can follow M.L.S. (My son has posters on his bedroom wall celebrating his favorite team, Arsenal, in London. The Fox Soccer Channel shows many more of their matches than the Red Bulls'.) In all, the professional game in America is likely to remain roughly as popular as it is now: somewhere behind hockey and ahead of bowling.

The U.S. game against Italy took place in the strangest of the German venues—Kaiserslautern, a big town tucked amid the hills of the Rhineland-Palatinate, near the border with Luxembourg. The Cup stadiums all have covered seating, video simulcasts, and clean bathrooms—true luxuries to someone used to the semicircular slum that is Shea Stadium. The arena in K-town (as the soldiers at nearby Ramstein Air Base call it) looks as if it had been made from vintage Legos. Noise reverberates inside the big rectangle, and the outnumbered and desperate American fans almost drowned out their Italian rivals. (The Italians were at a disadvantage: it is difficult to cheer while talking on a cell phone and smoking a cigarette.)

The U.S. players appeared transformed. For a while, they beat the Italians to loose balls, passed the ball with zip, and kept the action in the Italian end. But in the twenty-second minute the American defense went glassy-eyed on a thirty-yard free kick that Andrea Pirlo curved into the box, and Alberto Gilardino headed it into the goal. Suddenly, a repeat of the Czech disaster seemed likely. But five minutes later Bobby Convey, an American midfielder, sent a free kick from the right sideline and it went off course, straight to Cristian Zaccardo, who was guarding the far end of the net. The Italian swung his left foot to clear the ball out of the zone, but he misjudged the kick, and the ball squirted backward into his own goal. At first, the American players seemed more stunned than elated; like everyone else, they couldn't understand how such a gross blunder could have occurred. But the score was now 1–1.



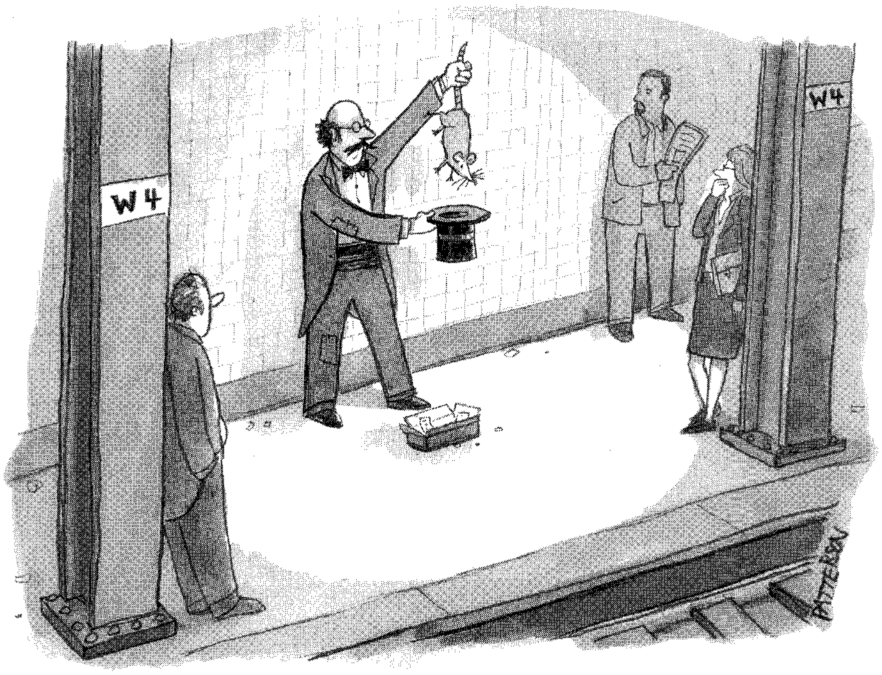
The indignity of the goal unnerved the Italians, and their frustration turned ugly. Without provocation, in the center of the pitch, Daniele de Rossi, a midfielder, savagely elbowed Brian McBride, a forward, in the face, causing a wound that required three stitches. The referee, Jorge Larrionda, of Uruguay, promptly showed de Rossi a red card—that is, threw him out of the game for a flagrant foul. (McBride, displaying the kind of grit associated with the English Premier League, where he plays for Fulham, returned to the game after the repair.) The attack seemed all too consistent with the current state of Italian soccer.

The oldest cliché in soccer journalism holds that style of play reflects national character. It is said that the Brazilians play with "Samba-infused joy and creativity," the Dutch with "meticulous precision," the English with "stubborn determination." It is telling that there is no particular phrase associated with the American style, which, such as it is, relies on speed and intelligence. These days, Italians play a style known as *catenaccio*—door bolt—which focusses far more on preventing goals than on scoring them. This defensive approach frequently leads to unattractive behavior, such as de Rossi's assault on McBride, and, as a consequence, Italian players are also famous for making operatic complaints to referees, who are especially important in their games. Italian teams often rely for goals on free kicks and penalties, which only referees can award. This, in turn, has contributed to corruption scandals, including one this year involving apparent payoffs to referees by people associated with the famous club Juventus, of Turin. A police investigation, known as Clean Feet, has led to the resignation of the team's general manager, its entire board of directors, and even Aldo Biscardi, the seventy-five-year-old host of Italy's most popular soccer television show. (Government wiretaps revealed that Biscardi had conspired with the Juventus manager to give favorable treatment to the team.)

In any event, after McBride's bloody mugging, Larrionda, the referee, became the game's protagonist. Ejected players can't be replaced, so the United States began playing with an eleven-to-ten advantage. Then, just before halftime, Larrionda showed a red card to an American defender, Pablo Mastroeni, who had clipped the ankle of Andrea Pirlo while attempting a tackle. This seemed excessive, and the American fans howled even louder than when their team had scored. Mastroeni had surely committed a foul, which leads to a free kick for the opposing team, and he may have deserved a yellow card, which constitutes a formal warning against more serious infractions. (Two yellow cards result in ejection.) Then, immediately after the half, Larrionda gave a second yellow card to Eddie Pope, another American defender, resulting in a bizarre ten-to-nine setup on the field, in Italy's favor. Each of Larrionda's calls was perhaps defensible, but together they looked dubious, like a sop to the Italians.

With so few players, the field was suddenly wide open, which increased each side's chance of scoring. But exhaustion began to weaken both teams, especially the undermanned Americans. Donovan partially redeemed himself for the Czech debacle by leading the Americans at midfield and distributing the ball confidently to his teammates, but he could not put it in the net. In the sixty-fifth minute, DaMarcus Beasley slid a ball into the goal, but Larrionda called it back after finding McBride offside. At the other end of the field, Kasey Keller, the goalkeeper, made a series of diving saves that kept the Americans in the game, and in the tournament.

By the end, the two teams looked like club fighters in a church basement, wearily throwing haymakers at each other. The ragged performances by both teams were unlikely to impress Argentina or Spain—the early standouts in the tournament—but the tie meant that the United States had survived to play a meaningful third game. If the Italians beat the Czechs, and the Americans defeated Ghana, then Arena's team would somehow stagger on to the final sixteen.



African teams have their own reputations—"flamboyant," "undisciplined," "creative"—which seem rooted more in racial stereotypes than in what transpires on the field. In Nuremberg last Thursday, Ghana played a sober, risk-averse game against the Americans. In the twenty-second minute, Haminu Draman, a Ghanaian forward, humiliated Claudio Reyna, the American captain, stripping him of the ball just left of the box and then firing a perfect shot into the upper right corner of the goal. Beasley, who had been having a dismal tournament, made up for it by setting up Clint Dempsey for the first American goal, in the forty-third minute. But the American momentum was short-lived. Just before halftime, Oguchi Onyewu, an American defender, was whistled for a dubious penalty in the box, and Stephen Appiah, Ghana's captain, converted the penalty kick to put his team back in the lead.

Like many soccer games, the contest was more stressful than enjoyable to watch. Because goals are so rare, fans alternate between frustration with their team and anxiety about the opponent. The clock never stops in each forty-five-minute half, so there's no respite from the tension, or even time to buy a snack. (To leave one's seat is to risk not seeing one of the game's few goals get scored.) It's little wonder that many American fans, raised on the pauses between innings in baseball, and the committee meetings known as huddles in football—not to mention the pitching changes and time-outs that prolong the conclusions of these games—find soccer games both bewildering and annoying. "Soccer does not have the rhythm that Americans are used to," Kissinger told me from New York last week. "Americans like their games segmented into different plays, which can then be statistically analyzed. Soccer, with its continuous action, requires a change of thinking."

The loss was especially frustrating for the U.S. team, because Italy wound up beating the Czechs 2–0, which meant that an American victory would have put the team into the final sixteen. "I think our team has regressed since 2002," Kissinger said. Or, as Ratomir Dujkovic, Ghana's Serbian-born coach, put it, "For me, the result was not a surprise." He added, in the gently patronizing way that the world speaks of American soccer, "Your team is good, but now, unfortunately, they have to go home." ♦

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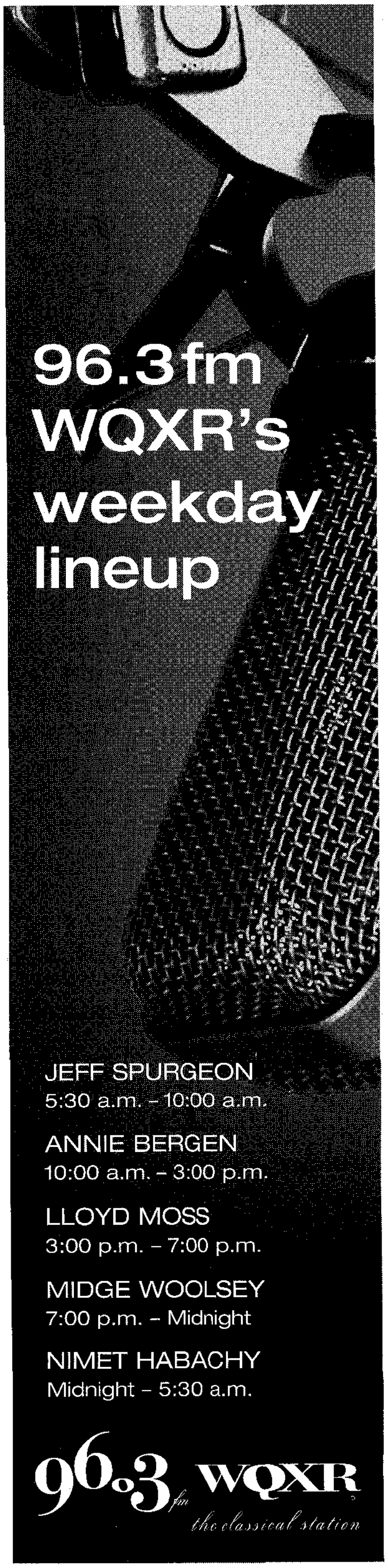


CASUAL

THUS ATE ZARATHUSTRA

BY WOODY ALLEN

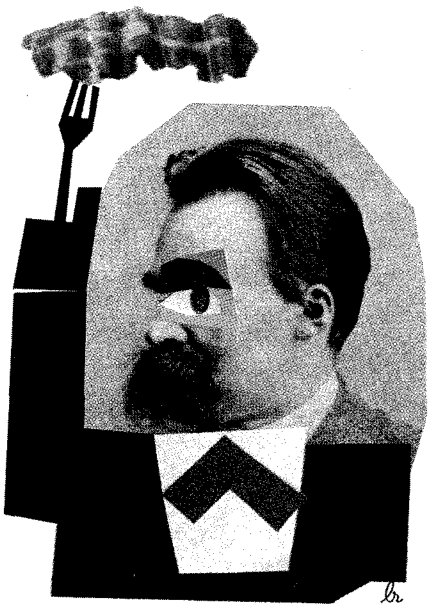
There's nothing like the discovery of an unknown work by a great thinker to set the intellectual community atwitter and cause academics to dart about like those things one sees when looking at a drop of water under a microscope. On a recent trip to Heidelberg to procure some rare nineteenth-century duelling scars, I happened upon just such a treasure. Who would have thought that "Friedrich Nietzsche's Diet Book" existed? While its authenticity might appear to be a soupçon dicey to the niggling, most who have studied the work agree that no other Western thinker has come so close to reconciling Plato with Pritikin. Selections follow.

•

Fat itself is a substance or essence of a substance or mode of that essence. The big problem sets in when it accumulates on your hips. Among the pre-Socratics, it was Zeno who held that weight was an illusion and that no matter how much a man ate he would always be only half as fat as the man who never does push-ups. The quest for an ideal body obsessed the Athenians, and in a lost play by Aeschylus Clytemnestra breaks her vow never to snack between meals and tears out her eyes when she realizes she no longer fits into her bathing suit.

It took the mind of Aristotle to put the weight problem in scientific terms, and in an early fragment of the Ethics he states that the circumference of any man is equal to his girth multiplied by pi. This sufficed until the Middle Ages, when Aquinas translated a number of menus into Latin and the first really good oyster bars opened. Dining out was still frowned upon by the Church, and valet parking was a venal sin.

As we know, for centuries Rome regarded the Open Hot Turkey Sandwich as the height of licentiousness; many sandwiches were forced to stay closed and only reopened after the Reformation. Fourteenth-century religious paintings first depicted scenes of damnation in which the overweight wandered Hell, condemned to salads and yogurt. The Spaniards were particularly cruel, and during the Inquisition a man could be put to death for stuffing an avocado with crabmeat.



LAURIE ROSENWALD

No philosopher came close to solving the problem of guilt and weight until Descartes divided mind and body in two, so that the body could gorge itself while the mind thought, Who cares, it's not me. The great question of philosophy remains: If life is meaningless, what can be done about alphabet soup? It was Leibniz who first said that fat consisted of monads. Leibniz dieted and exercised but never did get rid of his monads—at least, not the ones that adhered to his thighs. Spinoza, on the other hand, dined sparingly because he believed that God existed in everything and it's intimidating to wolf down a knish if you think you're ladling mustard onto the First Cause of All Things.

Is there a relationship between a healthy regimen and creative genius? We need only look at the composer Richard Wagner and see what he puts away. French fries, grilled cheese, nachos—Christ, there's no limit to the man's appetite, and yet his music is sublime. Cosima, his wife, goes pretty good, too, but at least she runs every day. In a scene cut from the "Ring" cycle, Siegfried decides to dine out with the Rhine maidens and in heroic fashion consumes an ox, two dozen fowl, several wheels of cheese, and fifteen kegs of beer. Then the check comes and he's short. The point here is that in life one is entitled to a side dish of either coleslaw or potato salad, and the choice must be made in terror, with the knowledge that not only is our time on earth limited but most kitchens close at ten.

The existential catastrophe for Schopenhauer was not so much eating as munching. Schopenhauer railed against the aimless nibbling of peanuts and potato chips while one engaged in other activities. Once munching has begun, Schopenhauer held, the human will cannot resist further munching, and the result is a universe with crumbs over everything. No less misguided was Kant, who proposed that we order lunch in such a manner that if everybody ordered the same thing the world would function in a moral way. The problem Kant didn't foresee is that if everyone orders the same dish there will be squabbling in the kitchen over who gets the last branzino. "Order like you are ordering for every human being on earth," Kant advises, but what if the man next to you doesn't eat guacamole? In the end, of course, there are no moral foods—unless we count soft-boiled eggs.

To sum up: apart from my own Beyond Good and Evil Flapjacks and Will to Power Salad Dressing, of the truly great recipes that have changed Western ideas Hegel's Chicken Pot Pie was the first to employ leftovers with meaningful political implications. Spinoza's Stir-Fried Shrimp and Vegetables can be enjoyed by atheists and agnostics alike, while a little-known recipe of Hobbes's for Barbecued Baby-Back Ribs remains an intellectual conundrum. The great thing about the Nietzsche Diet is that once the pounds are shed they stay off—which is not the case with Kant's "Tractatus on Starches."

Breakfast
Orange juice
2 strips of bacon
Profiteroles
Baked clams
Toast, herbal tea

The juice of the orange is the very being of the orange made manifest, and by this I mean its true nature, and that which gives it its "orangeness" and keeps it from tasting like, say, a poached salmon or grits. To the devout, the notion of anything but cereal for breakfast produces anxiety and dread, but with the death of God anything is permitted, and profiteroles and clams may be eaten at will, and even buffalo wings.

Lunch
1 bowl of spaghetti, with tomato and basil
White bread
Mashed potatoes
Sacher Torte

The powerful will always lunch on rich foods, well seasoned with heavy sauces, while the weak peck away at wheat germ and tofu, convinced that their suffering will earn them a reward in an afterlife where grilled lamb chops are all the rage. But if the afterlife is, as I assert, an eternal recurrence of this life, then the meek must dine in perpetuity on low carbs and broiled chicken with the skin removed.

Dinner
Steak or sausages
Hash-brown potatoes
Lobster thermidor
Ice cream with whipped cream or layer cake

This is a meal for the Superman. Let those who are riddled with angst over high triglycerides and trans fats eat to please their pastor or nutritionist, but the Superman knows that marbleized meat and creamy cheeses with rich desserts and, oh, yes, lots of fried stuff is what Dionysus would eat—if it weren't for his reflux problem.

Aphorisms

Epistemology renders dieting moot. If nothing exists except in my mind, not only can I order anything; the service will be impeccable.

Man is the only creature who ever stiffs a waiter. ♦

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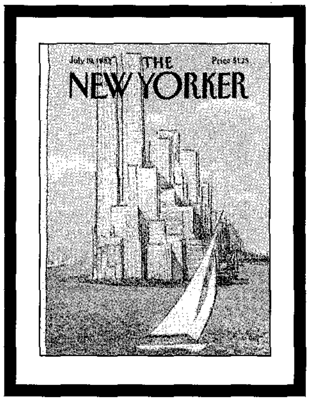

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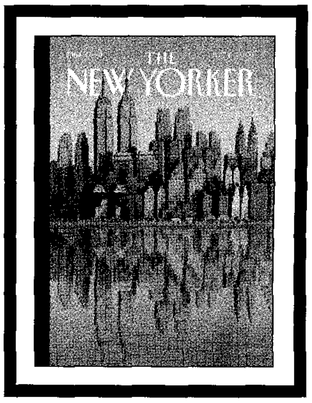

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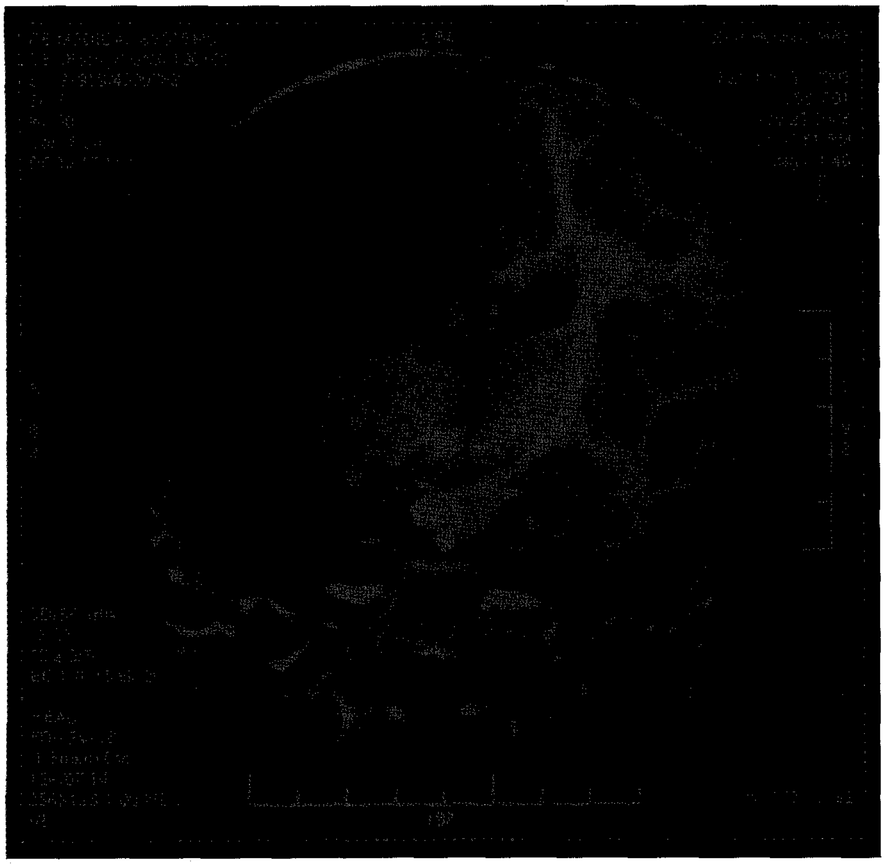
ANNALS OF MEDICINE

THE DEEPEST CUT

How can someone live with only half a brain?

BY CHRISTINE KENNEALLY

At nine o'clock on July 28th last year, Wendy Nissley carried her two-year-old daughter, Lacy, into O.R. 12 at Johns Hopkins Hospital to have half of her brain removed. Lacy suffers from a rare malformation of the brain, known as hemimegalencephaly, in which one hemisphere grows larger than the other. The condition causes seizures, and Lacy was having so many—up to forty in a day—that, at an age when other toddlers were trying out sentences, she could produce only a few language-like sounds. As long as Lacy's malformed right hemisphere was attached to the rest of her brain, it would prevent her left hemisphere from functioning normally. So Lacy's parents had brought her to Johns Hopkins for a hemispherectomy, which is probably the most radical procedure in neurosurgery.



A post-operative MRI scan of a hemispherectomy patient's skull.

COURTESY GEORGE JALLO/JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL

Wendy laid her daughter on the operating table. Because Lacy was so small, it took the anesthesiologist almost ninety minutes to insert her intravenous lines. George Jallo, the attending neurosurgeon, spent a long time arranging her head on gel padding and then drew "Cut here" markings on her shaved scalp. The rest of Lacy's head, including her face, was covered with a sterile drape. Jallo made one long cut across the top of her head from the front to the back, and another at right angles to the first, which started midway along it and stopped just in front of her right ear. He folded back the scalp and made small holes in her skull with a power drill, outlining a rough semicircle. Then he used the drill to connect the dots and removed a portion of the skull. He cut another T in the dura, a thin, leathery membrane covering the brain. Gently, he peeled back two large flaps.

By half past one, Jallo and a resident had already removed the right frontal lobe. David Lieberman, the pediatric neurologist who had examined Lacy when she first came to Johns Hopkins, looked on, shaking his head in wonderment. "It's so open," he said, turning to me. "Normally, with brain surgery, you make a hole about this big"—he curled his thumb and index finger into a circle.

After removing the frontal lobe, Jallo embarked on the parietal lobe. In case complications put a sudden stop to the surgery, it was important to take out the seizure hot spots first, gradually working through the hemisphere in descending order of priority: after the parietal lobe would come a small section of the occipital lobe, then the temporal lobe, then the rest of the occipital. Finally, Jallo would cut the corpus callosum, the bundle of fibres that connect the two hemispheres of the brain. The surgeons slowly worked around each side of the parietal lobe, making tiny pinches in the brain with electric cauterizing forceps. There was a slight smell of burning in the bright, noisy operating room. As the cut became deeper and wider, the tissue on either side browned and blackened, and the lobe started to move back and forth. At the bottom of the parietal wedge, the clean white of nerve fibres was visible; as the lobe was severed, they came apart like string cheese. A surgical technician bent toward Jallo with a small plastic bowl in his hands. Jallo picked the lobe out of the skull—it was the size of an infant's fist—and dropped it into the container.

As she led me out of the O.R., Eileen Vining, the attending neurologist, said, "Did you see how rigid it was? Normal brain sags in your hands." Vining talked quickly, moving from one complicated idea to the next, punctuating each with "O.K.?" and an expectant nod. She had been in and out of the operating room all morning, and now she was off to find the Nissleys and tell them how Lacy was doing.

Four hours later, Vining took me back into the O.R. Lacy's right hemisphere was gone, and her cranium looked like a wide, uneven bowl. I could see the deep cavity where the frontal and parietal lobes had been, and the white-pink color inside the base of the skull. In the middle of the remaining brain was a shallow mound where Jallo had left a layer of nerve fibres to protect the ventricle, a fluid-filled pocket that cushions the brain and the spinal cord. The white matter there was now gray-black. Jallo and his resident lightly touched their forceps to it, and the cauterizers fizzed, sealing the brain to prevent microhemorrhages. Hemorrhaging is a constant concern in brain surgery, and at one point in the operation Jallo decided to leave in a small piece of the right occipital lobe which threatened to bleed dangerously. Jallo glanced at Vining and Lieberman, and the doctors stretched forward to look at the severed corpus callosum. Over and over, the surgical technician poured in saline, and Jallo and his resident drew it out again with a loud suction pump.

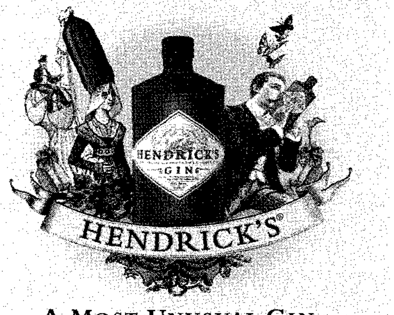
When he had finished removing brain tissue, Jallo tipped in small packets of Surgicel, a feathery white substance that helps blood to clot. It melted onto the surface of the brain. "That was good. There was not a lot of bleeding," Vining said. "You never know what you are going to get until you open it up. Sometimes you just go in there and you hold your breath and pray."

In the final hour, Jallo sutured Lacy's dura, which had shrunk slightly from dehydration, and filled the right side of her head with saline. The technician then brought the missing section of the skull back to Jallo, carrying it in a wide right angle over surgical carts rather than risk moving it over the floor. Jallo reattached it, using four tiny dissolvable plates made of a sugarlike substance. He then closed the scalp incision with a staple gun, leaving seventy-eight aluminum staples in Lacy's skin. The hemispherectomy had taken nine hours. The resident bandaged Lacy's head, gently turned her onto her right side, and stuck a piece of tape on her head that said "This side up."

I first met the Nissleys three months before Lacy's surgery, at their home in Palmyra, Pennsylvania. As I drove up, I could see Lacy's father, Mike, dangling a leg over the edge of the front porch. He looked like a surfer, with a goatee beard and gold-lens Oakleys pushed back on his head. Wendy sat on a chair near the front door, and Lacy's four-year-old sister, Lily, flitted around the adults. Lacy, blond like her mother, lay across Wendy's lap. "She had a seizure just before you got here, so she's sleeping now," Wendy said. They invited me inside.

Lacy had her first seizure on October 13, 2003, when she was four and a half months old. Wendy had been doing laundry, and when she turned around she saw that Lacy's lips were blue and that she was shaking. She called 911, but by the time the ambulance arrived the seizures had ended. In the following month, the family went to the hospital many times, but, on each occasion, by the time they got there the spell had ended and there didn't seem to be anything wrong. The doctors took an MRI but saw nothing unexpected, and they suggested that Lacy might have acid reflux or sleep apnea, or could even be doing it on purpose, out of anger. "But she wasn't angry," Mike said. "She was sitting there happy, and all of a sudden it hit her like a train." One doctor put her on phenobarbital, increasing the dose each time there was another seizure. "It made her lethargic, like she was drunk," Wendy said. That November, Lacy had a terrible attack. "Her arm went up in the air," Mike said, throwing his left arm straight up, stiff. "Her lips went blue. She was having them in a row." By the time the ambulance came, the seizures had subsided, but the attendants advised the Nissleys to get in their car and take Lacy to Johns Hopkins anyway. The drive took two hours, and, just as Mike and Wendy walked over to the triage nurse, Lacy began another cluster of seizures. The nurse said, "We've got to get you a room."

At Johns Hopkins, David Lieberman ordered another MRI. The scan seemed normal, and after a week of further testing Lacy was sent home without a clear diagnosis. Lieberman, in consultation with Eileen Vining and the Johns Hopkins epilepsy group, tried to control the convulsions with medication. Lacy was weaned off the phenobarbital and put on Dilantin and Ativan. They tried Diastat, Topamax, and,



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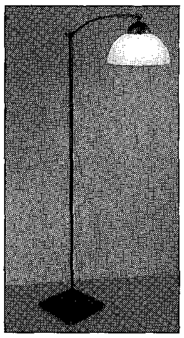
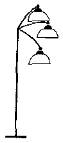

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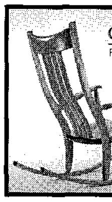

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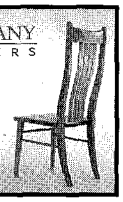

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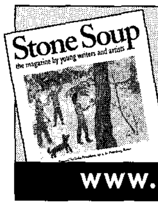

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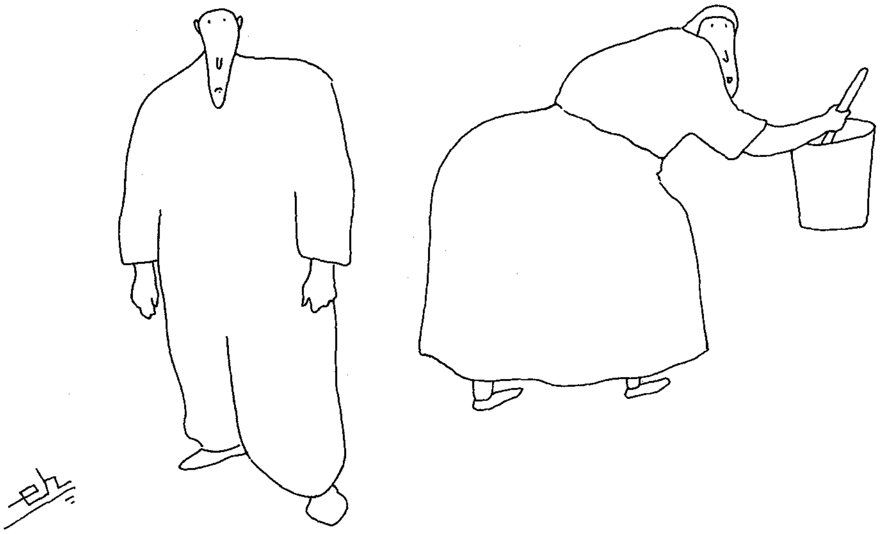


“If you want the giddy embrace that comes with conjugal shenanigans, you’ll have to wait till I get this soap scum outta the slop bucket.”

• •

later, Tegretol and Keppra. But the seizures continued. When they hit, Mike and Wendy would lay Lacy on the floor and talk to her. “Every couple of minutes, she would moan and groan like she’s in pain,” Wendy told me. Mike nodded. “They said that seizures don’t hurt,” he said. “I don’t know that I believe that.” As we spoke, Lacy sat up a few times and turned to look at me. When I waved and said, “Hi,” she said, “Ba.” Twice, she smiled; once she looked completely terrified. Each time, she turned her shaky head toward her mother and nestled down.

In April, 2004, Lacy returned to Johns Hopkins for four days of continuous EEG monitoring, and again in November for another MRI. The scan showed that she had an enlarged right hemisphere. The bulge on the right made the midline between the two lobes bow slightly toward the smaller side, and there was a strange fogginess on the right side of the scan, whereas the left was clear. Lieberman told the Nissleys about hemimegalencephaly. “We had a diagnosis, finally, and we were happy with that,” Mike said. “It’s not sleep apnea. It’s not acid reflux. It is something. We didn’t know if she was going to die.” Diana Pillas, who coördinates counselling at the Johns Hopkins epilepsy center, told Mike and Wendy about various possible treatments. They could try a ketogenic diet—which is ninety per cent fat and has been shown to stop convulsions in some children—but Lacy would be restricted to a special liquid formula for two years. She also told them about hemispherectomies. “I couldn’t believe it. I didn’t know people could do that and be alive,” Mike said. “The first question I had was ‘Well, what do they put in there?’ ”

After the initial shock, Mike and Wendy decided that the surgery was the best option. Lacy’s seizures had hindered her development to the point where she couldn’t walk unless she was holding someone’s hand, and she hadn’t learned how to chew. The seizures were also becoming more frequent, and they knew that children with her condition tended to live much shorter lives than their peers. The Nissleys were concerned about the costs, though. Mike worked as a butcher at a local supermarket, and Wendy, a doctor’s receptionist, had had to quit working in order to look after Lacy; no day-care program would take her. Johns Hopkins put them in touch with another family whose child had had the procedure, and who told the Nissleys about the financial aid that was available. They finally made a date.

I bumped into Mike and Wendy as I came out of the O.R. with Vining. They were smiling but tense. “We were really stressed,” Mike said later. “We were all wondering if it was the right thing to do. No one said it, but we all knew what we were thinking.”

Neurosurgery began with trepanation, the prehistoric practice of scraping, sawing, or boring a hole in the skull. Trepanned skulls, some as old as ten thousand years, have been unearthed in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific Islands. Knowledge about the brain’s anatomy has accumulated from the time of Galen, in the second century, but neurosurgery was not recognized as a distinct specialty until the early twentieth century. Since then, neurosurgeons have saved many brains by selectively destroying some of their tissue. They’ve injected brains with pure alcohol, electrocuted them, and inserted wire loops and metal probes and wiggled them about. They have frozen brain tissue, and they have burned it. But no brain surgery is as dramatic as a hemispherectomy. “A hemispherectomy is the opposite of everything you are taught in neurosurgery,” Jallo told me. “You are told throughout your residency training to preserve the brain, get what you have to get, do your work, and leave, but with this you have to take out everything along the way.”

The first recorded hemispherectomy was performed, in 1888, on a dog by Friedrich Goltz, a prominent German physiologist. (Apparently, the post-op animal exhibited the same personality and a minimal reduction in intelligence.) In humans, the operation was pioneered by Walter Dandy, a Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon, who, in 1923, performed his first hemispherectomy on a patient with an aggressive brain tumor in the right hemisphere. The patient lived for three and a half years, until the cancer invaded the remaining hemisphere. Dandy performed another four hemispherectomies, all for patients who had brain cancer in their right hemispheres. In 1938, the Canadian neurosurgeon Kenneth McKenzie performed a hemispherectomy on a child suffering from seizures that could not be controlled with drugs. The operation was a success, and hemispherectomies came to be more popular as a treatment for chronic seizures than for cancer. But eventually the operation fell out of favor. Doctors found that, around ten years after the surgery, some patients became paralyzed or comatose, and sometimes died. This was caused by a buildup of cerebrospinal fluid, a saline-like substance that cushions the brain. The fluid is produced at the rate of about one teaspoon per minute, and in normal brains it is reabsorbed—the total supply of fluid renews itself every five hours. But in some cases the trauma of the operation seemed to prevent this, and the resultant pressure could distort the skull and push the remaining brain to one side, a condition known as hydrocephalus.

The hemispherectomy's resurgence in popularity is largely the work of John Freeman, a pediatric neurologist who has been at Johns Hopkins nearly his entire career. Tall and charmingly gruff, Freeman is seventy-three and semi-retired, though when I visited him before Lacy's operation he was still putting in forty hours a week in his cluttered office. "Semi-retired for a workaholic," he said. Freeman saw a few hemispherectomies while on a training fellowship at Columbia, and started ordering them for patients at Johns Hopkins in the early nineteen-seventies. By then, hydrocephalus could be detected early, with scans, and the excess fluid drained to other parts of the body, where it was reabsorbed naturally. In the early nineteen-eighties, he proposed the treatment, for the first time, for a patient with a diseased left hemisphere—a thirteen-year-old girl who suffered such uncontrollable seizures that she had spent several months in the intensive-care unit. The prospect of removing a left hemisphere—rather than a right one, as had been the case in previous operations—was daunting. It is generally thought that language is situated in the left half of the brain, and no one could say for certain what the effect of removing that hemisphere would be. "We worried about that," Freeman said. "What would your life be like if you couldn't talk, and you couldn't understand, and you were just there and aware?" While a number of the hospital's faculty approved the operation, an outraged senior physician vetoed it. But the only alternative, Freeman observed, was for the girl to remain in intensive care for the rest of her life, so the following week, when the doctor in question was away, Freeman went ahead and arranged the operation. "Can you imagine doing a hemispherectomy without the assurance that the patient would talk?" he asked. The operation was a success, and the girl recovered the ability to speak. "Now," he said, "I can tell the families: they all talk."

If Freeman revived the practice of hemispherectomies, their leading practitioner has been Ben Carson, who joined Johns Hopkins in 1984 and, at thirty-two, became the youngest head of pediatric neurosurgery in the nation. A star in his field, Carson has written a book about his transformation from angry teen-ager in Detroit to renowned neurosurgeon. He did his first hemispherectomy a year after coming to Johns Hopkins. The Washington *Post* wrote a story about it, and soon the hospital was getting calls from doctors all over the country saying that they had patients with intractable seizures whom they wanted to send. Carson has now performed more than a hundred hemispherectomies. One of his oldest patients had the surgery in his thirties.

Carson's office, like Freeman's, is strewn with files, books, and X-rays, and there is an abundance of photographs, cards, honorary Ph.D.s, and gifts—a hanging plate painted with poetry, a framed sampler embroidered with "Dr. Carson," and, on the windowsill, a statuette of a handsome black man in a white doctor's coat who looks exactly like Carson. In person, Carson is mild, tired, and friendly. He told me that when he started doing hemispherectomies he would reach in and slice out an entire hemisphere at once. But he modified this practice after one patient went into a coma for a month. Carson believes that the patient's brain stem was moved about excessively during the procedure. "It's too much like what I'm doing right now," he said, grappling with a plastic model of the brain in an effort to pop out a recalcitrant lobe, which eventually shot off into the mess on the floor. I asked him Mike's question, about all that space left by the missing lobes. In the past, he said, doctors worried about this and tried to anchor the remaining brain by stitching it to the dura. They would put all kinds of things in the cranial cavity—one surgeon used sterile Ping-Pong balls. But, as Carson did more hemispherectomies, he realized that the brain's own drip of cerebrospinal fluid could adequately fill the cavity. Sometimes the remaining brain moves during the weeks following the surgery, but usually by less than an inch. "It doesn't seem to be a problem," he said. Much of Carson's method is intuitive. "You develop a feel for the brain," he said. "Normal brain feels like a very soft boiled egg. A bad brain feels like a mushy apple."

Freeman and Carson haven't merely pioneered the surgery; with their colleagues at Johns Hopkins, they have undertaken research into the effects of hemispherectomy on behavior, language, and psychology. "We as a group here in pediatric epilepsy have changed the way children are handled," Freeman told me. "It's not just the surgery; it's the network and the contact. It's the best thing I've ever done, and I don't even do them." Freeman and Carson are in the process of handing the practice over to Eileen Vining and George Jallo. Each doctor somehow resembles his successor. Freeman and Vining are obsessive clinical researchers and vigorous wranglers of surgeons, doctors, and patients. Jallo, like Carson, has a quiet intensity and the gentlest of handshakes. When I asked the surgeons how it's possible for people with half a brain to live, let alone have a life, each of them spoke about plasticity, flexibility, redundancy, and potential, and then they smiled and said the same thing: "We don't really know."

"After I got this car, I noticed so many CR-Vs," Christina Santhouse said. "I guess you notice them after you get one." Christina was driving a nice, steady five miles per hour above the speed limit on the way to the Bristol Pike Lanes bowling alley, in Croydon, Pennsylvania. She recently turned eighteen and got her license on the second try. Her family outfitted her Honda CR-V with an extra-long rearview mirror, additional side mirrors, a knob on the wheel for steering, and a rod that brings control of the indicator over to the right side. As an eight-year-old, Christina played soccer, swam, and did karate. Then she contracted Rasmussen's encephalitis, a little-understood condition that causes chronic inflammation of the brain. One day at the Jersey Shore, her foot started twitching, and within a few months, as the right side of her brain deteriorated, she

TWO HORSES

On a warm night in June
I went to the lake, got on all fours,
and drank like an animal. Two horses
came up beside me to drink as well.
This is amazing, I thought, but who will believe it?
The horses eyed me from time to time, snorting
and nodding. I felt the need to respond, so I snorted, too,
but haltingly, as though not really wanting to be heard.
The horses must have sensed that I was holding back.
They moved slightly away. Then I thought they might have known me
in another life—the one in which I was a poet.
They might have even read my poems, for back then,
in that shadowy time when our eagerness knew no bounds,
we changed styles almost as often as there were days in the year.

—*Mark Strand*

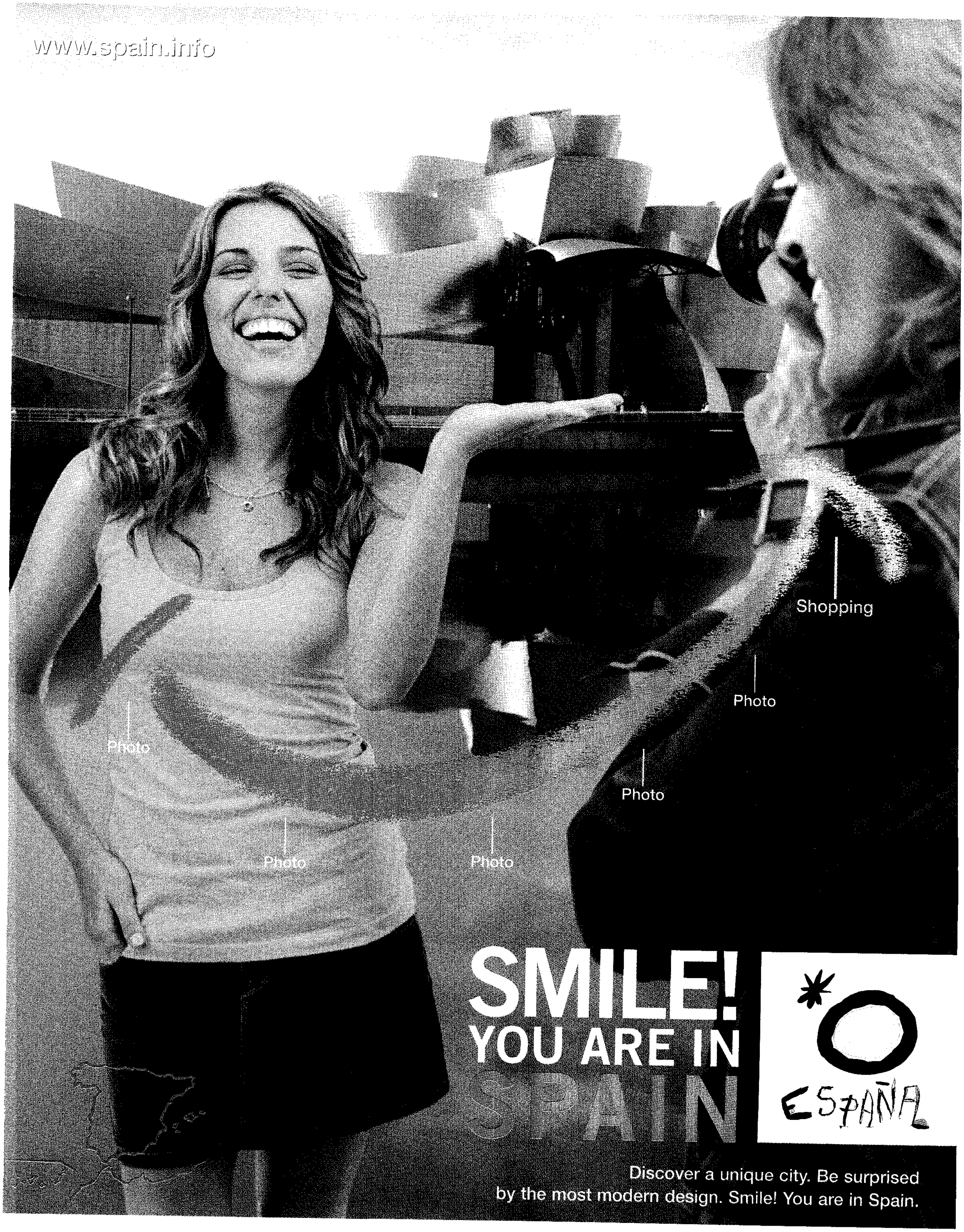
was having hundreds of seizures a day. Christina became Johns Hopkins hemispherectomy case No. 30—her surgery took fourteen hours, one of the longest operations Carson has performed. The alterations to Christina's car are necessary, because she has impaired motor function on her left side. (Each hemisphere of the brain primarily controls the opposite side of the body.) She also lost sight on the left side of each eye, and now wears prism glasses that bring the left field of vision over to the center of the eye. When I met her, she had taken her S.A.T.s and just finished high school, coming in seventy-sixth in a class of two hundred and twenty-five. Last fall, Christina was a freshman at College Misericordia, in Dallas, Pennsylvania, where she's studying speech pathology.

When we pulled into the parking lot of the bowling alley, she parked in the same spot that she always used. She wore jeans, a college hoodie, pink nail polish, and Skechers sneakers. A small brace beneath her jeans kept her left leg straight, though she still had a slight limp, and her left arm was partly paralyzed. "I can do this"—she shrugged her left shoulder, moving it and the arm around. "I can't do this"—she twinkled the fingers of her right hand at me. Christina booked us a lane and we sat down to put on our bowling shoes. She was on her high-school varsity bowling team for four years, and in her final year she was captain. She pulled a leather glove onto her right hand with her teeth and then insisted that I go first.

I knocked down eight pins, and Christina knocked down six. "I get really nervous and my arm gets stiff," she said. "Also, I haven't practiced for a month. And the finger holes in my ball are cold." In the next round, I knocked down seven pins, and Christina bowled a strike. As the game continued, my score lagged, while Christina bowled spare after strike after spare. Her ball weighed fourteen pounds. I'm at least seven inches taller, so I started out with a sixteen-pound ball. After almost losing it on the first backswing, I changed to a fourteen-pound ball. As my elbow began to ache, I moved to a twelve, then a ten. Christina doesn't have the balance necessary to run and throw the ball, so she positions herself at the bottom of the lane, crouching slightly and swinging it like an underhand discus. I tried bowling like Christina. She coached me on where to stand and what to aim for, but my first ball, deprived of the momentum that comes from a running walk to the edge of the lane, dropped straight into the gutter. The second time, I swung harder and my ball rolled just a little farther before it hit the gutter. On the third try, I knocked down one pin. Christina explained that you have to work out which side you're stronger on, and step to that side as you swing. Her final score was a hundred and seventy.

Christina is a spectacular example of how well children can do after a hemispherectomy, but she is no outlier. Many children who have had hemispherectomies at Johns Hopkins are in high school, and one, a college student, is on the dean's list. The families of these children can barely believe the transformation, and not so long ago neurologists and neurosurgeons found it hard to believe as well. I asked Jallo if he remembered his first hemispherectomy. "Yes and no," he said. "I don't remember the patient. It was more of a 'Wow.' I was a resident in training and I assisted in one of the operations. I didn't realize you could take out that much brain tissue and have someone be so functional and useful in society. What amazes me is that, if someone all of a sudden strokes out half of the brain, more likely than not they are not going to survive. Yet a lot of these people develop their seizures when they're very young, or in utero, and when you take out half of their brain in one sitting it's as if they weren't touched."

There are wide variations in recovery, and any brain surgery carries grave risks. Many factors affect how well a patient does—age at the time of a condition's onset, age at the time of the operation, the nature of the condition itself, and the determination of parents and caregivers to maintain an intense schedule of therapy before and afterward. Possibly the greatest danger is posed by the brain's veins and arteries, which are so numerous and so wildly, individually arranged that they are impossible to map and very hard to control. Excessive bleeding can send patients into shock and then into comas from which they never return, or it can wipe out most brain function. The other conflicting challenge of the surgery is the necessity of making sure that enough tissue is removed. Freeman once saw a small boy who made good progress for six months following a hemispherectomy, after which he began to deteriorate. His doctors discovered that they had left a small piece of the excised hemisphere in the child's head. It was, said Freeman, no larger than the top joint of his thumb. But the electricity from that piece of neural tissue was enough to compromise the remaining hemisphere. The boy had another operation, a "redo," as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Spain

S ville Exhibition Illuminates Middle Ages

From the seventh to the fourteenth centuries, while the rest of Europe lived through the early medieval period, Muslims created a vibrant culture across the Iberian Peninsula.

Through September 30th, visitors to Seville can view **Ibn Khaldun, the Mediterranean in the 14th Century: Rise and Fall of Empires**, an exhibition that looks at one of history's most traumatic epochs and commemorates the sixth centennial anniversary of the death of an eminent Muslim intellectual.

Of Andalusian descent, Ibn Khaldun attended the court of the Nasrid King Muhammad V, where he was named ambassador to Pedro I of Castille's Seville domain. A social historian and celebrated author of "Muqqadima, the Introduction to Universal History," Khaldun is considered the founder of modern historical theory.

"Rise and Fall of Empires" examines a series of events that shook the fourteenth century: the Hundred Years War, the Black Plague, and the struggles for consolidation of the Spanish kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula.

The show displays some 300 objects gathered from museums and libraries across Europe and the Middle East. These include a thirteenth-century sultan's helmet, a priory chair of Dona Blanca of Aragon, a Koran lectern, a fourteenth-century Moorish king's sword, a centuries-old Muqqadima manuscript from Istanbul's Topkapi Palace, a nautical chart from the North African region Maghreb, bejewelled goblets, and a selection of seventy numismatic pieces from Spain's Royal Mint in Madrid.

Setting the exhibition in the exquisite Real Alcázar, Seville's most outstanding historic complex and the oldest royal residence still used by a European monarch, is particularly appropriate as the Mudéjar palace was visited by Ibn Khaldun between 1363 and 1365.

Real Alcázar offers special evening viewing hours during the show so attendees can also walk through the spectacular gardens, fountains, pavilions, and terraces of the royal residence by moonlight.

Through the translated writings of Ibn Khaldun, visitors will learn of the historic role Seville played as Spain's crossroads. Fourteenth-century exchanges between Christian, Muslim, and Jewish cultures formed a foundation for the Renaissance, when civilization began to emerge from the Middle Ages and flourish.

The exhibit is open daily from 10 A.M.–7 P.M. Nighttime visits to the show feature a series of exhibit-related projectio ns on the façade of the palace. Hours are from 8–11:30 P.M.

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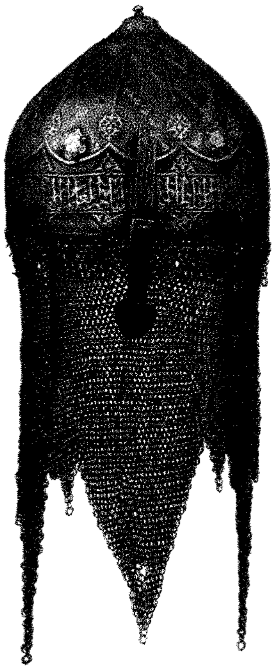

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the doctors at Johns Hopkins informally call it, in which the bad piece of brain was removed. After that, he had no more seizures.

The brain's remarkable capacity for recovery has long fascinated scientists. Bradley Schlaggar, a pediatric neurologist and a professor at Washington University in St. Louis, told me about an experiment that he conducted for his Ph.D. He transplanted the visual cortex from an embryonic rat's brain into the brain of a newborn rat, placing it in the spot occupied by the somatosensory cortex, which is responsible for such bodily sensations as pressure and temperature. Once the second rat had grown up, Schlaggar took a look at its brain and discovered that the transplanted chunk of visual cortex was functioning as a somatosensory cortex. Such a basic architectural feature of the brain was thought to be entirely hardwired, but Schlaggar showed that brain tissue could reprogram itself to serve different purposes. In another experiment, Leah Krubitzer, a professor of psychology at the University of California, removed large pieces of the brains of newborn marsupials. Once the marsupials became adult, she examined the brains again and found that they had organized themselves in such a way that the visual, auditory, and other somatosensory areas were all in the same relative positions that they would occupy in a normal brain, but they were smaller, commensurate with the total space available.

Schlaggar said that, in the mid-eighties, researchers invoked plasticity to explain the brain's ability to compensate for sudden damage—as when a stroke victim relearns to walk or talk. Now, Schlaggar said, the concept is used to describe a far more basic operation of the brain, including how it develops from childhood to adulthood, and even how an adult brain changes when a new skill is learned: "The idea is that when you talk about plasticity you are talking about every bit of learning that we do." For a long time, the assumptions that neuroscientists made about what was going on in a child's brain were based on how the adult brain worked. But now it seems that the brain's internal configuration depends on the age of the brain. If an eighteen-year-old's brain sustained some kind of damage, Schlaggar explained, it would occur in neural terrain that is organized differently from, say, that of a two-year-old, even if the injury was in the same spot. Children with damage to a particular area of the brain often suffer losses that are different from those sustained by an adult who experiences the same trauma.

When Schlaggar lectures on plasticity, he shows slides of the construction of the St. Louis Arch. "As the structure goes up, the relationship between the scaffolding and the leading edge of the two sides of the arch change as they rise up to meet in the middle," he said. "The interaction between the scaffold and the emerging mature structure is dynamic." The ever changing scaffolding of the developing brain, Schlaggar said, means that the functional organization of the brains of children performing a task can look quite different from that of adults engaged in the same task. If you show seven-year-olds and thirty-year-olds a word and ask them to generate a verb for that word, the two groups can do so with equal accuracy and in the same amount of time, but they use slightly different regions of the brain to arrive at their answers. Children, Schlaggar explained, use extra regions of the brain during their development which, like scaffolding that falls away, are no longer needed when the brain's architecture is mature.

Although the plasticity of Christina's brain in the years following surgery has enabled her to live a remarkably normal life, other aspects of her experience have been hard. When we were alone in the car, Christina told me about years of social difficulties. "I didn't tell many people at high school, but it kind of got out," she said. She didn't make friends until junior high. A few years after the operation, one of her mother's relatives phoned to say that there was a photograph of Christina in *The National Enquirer*. Before going to Misericordia, Christina hoped for a fresh start, but when she spent an introductory night there her roommate showed her a photocopied article about her hemispherectomy. A psychology professor had handed them out to her class.

"Lou, c'm'ere—you gotta check out this guy's Degas!"

After bowling, Christina drove me to her home and I spoke to her mother, Lynne, and her grandmother Mary Lou. We looked at photographs taken the day of the hemispherectomy, and we watched a video of Christina at Johns Hopkins before the surgery. She is sitting on a bed, and her foot begins to twitch. Within seconds, the twitches multiply and cascade through her body, and she falls back onto the bed completely helpless. In another video, Carson strides from the O.R. after Christina's hemispherectomy. He looks utterly invigorated. Lynne, waiting outside, clasps his hands and then crumples before him in tears.

The day after Lacy's surgery, Jallo came by early to visit her. She was moving her right arm and leg weakly, and her color was good. The next day, she started to run a fever, and then she had the worst seizures she's ever had—three in a row, each ten minutes long. This was not unusual—most practitioners think it's caused by the trauma of the operation—but it wasn't good. The doctors adjusted her medication, and over the next few days she improved. When I phoned Mike, he said that, four days after the surgery, she had been out of bed a few times to be held in her mother's lap. "She's not doing much of anything on the left side," he said. The left side of Lacy's body had always been weak, because it was controlled by the damaged right hemisphere. With that hemisphere gone, Lacy would need a year's intensive therapy to remind her brain of the existence of her left arm and leg. Three weeks after the surgery, Lacy's staples were removed and she was released from the hospital.

On a wet October day more than two months after the operation, I drove back to Palmyra. As I pulled up to the house, I could see two small heads at the front window. Lily and Lacy were standing side by side on the couch, peering out. The doctors had told Mike and Wendy that it could take Lacy six to twelve months to get back to where she had been before the operation, but since July she had made extraordinary progress. "We thought she'd be a blob for a few months," Mike said. "But once she started eating and got her strength back she was straight at it."

We sat again in the living room. Lacy was pale and skinny, and her white-blond hair was an inch long. The scar underneath was barely visible. She was in constant motion, crawling and walking about on her knees. Sometimes, when she crawled, she dragged the knuckles of her left hand on the floor. She babbled and squealed, and she said "Yeah" when I asked her how she was. She helped herself to a bottle of milk and drank from it while she idled on her knees. She surfed around the furniture and stood at an activity table in front of me. When I held out my right hand to her, she wobbled for a second and then grabbed it with her left hand. She swung her right hand around, placed it on top, paused, and was off again. Then she sat with her back to me. She kept looking over her right shoulder to see if I was still there, then looking away. "She's really silly all the time," Mike said.

A month after the operation, Lacy began seeing a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, and a speech therapist on a regular schedule. The speech therapist would talk with her face right up against Lacy's, and after a few sessions Lacy began moving her mouth to mimic the therapist. She learned some sign language, and used the sign for "more" a lot at the dinner table, where she could now eat the same food as her family. She still had to take the anticonvulsants Tegretol and Keppra twice a day, and the doctors thought that it would be a year before she could stop. But there had been no more seizures, and, the week before I visited the Nissleys, Lacy had taken three steps by herself for the first time.

By early December, Lacy was walking everywhere, and in January the family returned to Johns Hopkins for a scheduled checkup. In Jallo's report, he wrote that Lacy had done beautifully. She had had no seizures, and she was babbling and walking independently. She was "a happy child." Lacy still showed a clear preference for her right side, but he wrote that he hoped for an improvement in tone and a loosening up on the left side.

For two months after that, Lacy walked and played, but in March she had a setback. Wendy put her down for an afternoon nap, and about fifteen minutes later she had a seizure. Wendy said, "She just woke up, instantly, with her eyes bulging out." The seizure lasted a few seconds, and afterward Lacy rolled over and went to sleep. She woke up happy. Everything was fine for a few days, but then she had another seizure, again about fifteen minutes after she had fallen asleep. "We were shocked," Wendy said. "Lacy went about seven months without any seizures. It is disappointing." The seizures increased steadily—after about a month, there were a few every day, each lasting five or six seconds. According to Wendy, Lacy didn't appear particularly distressed by them, though occasionally they made her more tired. "We are not sure what the next step will be," Wendy said, but she and Mike remained optimistic. For Lacy's third birthday, they had a big cookout in a rented pavilion at a local park beside a lake.

When Wendy drove Lacy back to Johns Hopkins, Vining was thrilled with her general progress. Developmentally, she said, Lacy was fulfilling expectations, and even the recurrence of the seizures wasn't unduly alarming. "They are very mild," she said. There were no signs of them on the EEG and they lasted, in total, less than a minute per day. Vining speculated that Lacy might have outgrown the dosage of one of her anti-seizure medications, and she increased it. After a few weeks, however, there was no improvement; the seizures were lasting longer, and had begun to show up on the EEG. Vining switched Lacy to a different anticonvulsant, Trileptal. Another possible cause of the problem was the tiny nub of occipital lobe that Jallo had left in Lacy's brain during the operation. I asked Vining whether Lacy would ever need a "redo" to remove that final piece of the right hemisphere. She explained that only time would tell. Vining was hopeful that the new drug would solve the problem. If it didn't, she said, they would have to think seriously about going in again. ♦

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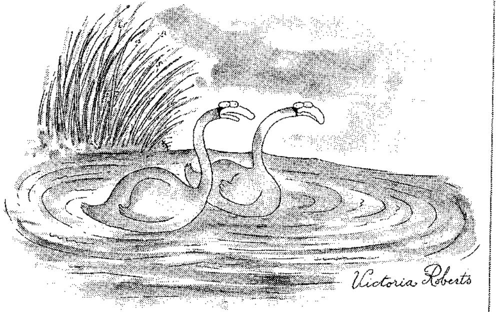
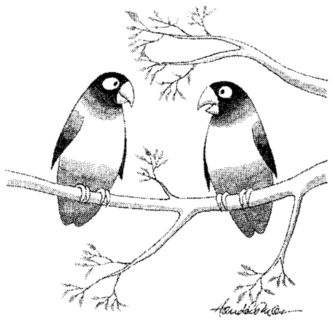
THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LOVE



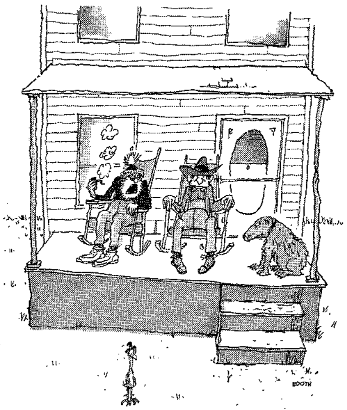
"Maybe we mate for life because we're lazy."

Victoria Roberts, 2005



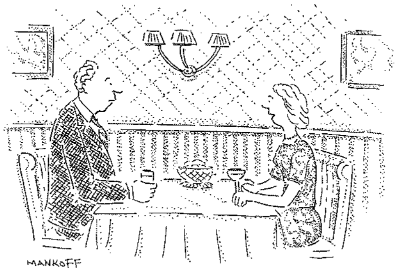
"Of course I love you—I'm programmed to love you. I'm a goddam lovebird."

J. B. Handelsman, 1993



"Were we gay?"

George Booth, 2006



"You're a good husband, Dave—I just want to start marrying other people."

Robert Mankoff, 2006

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

THE HIDDEN POWER

The legal mind behind the White House's war on terror.

BY JANE MAYER

On December 18th, Colin Powell, the former Secretary of State, joined other prominent Washington figures at FedEx Field, the Redskins' stadium, in a skybox belonging to the team's owner. During the game, between the Redskins and the Dallas Cowboys, Powell spoke of a recent report in the *Times* which revealed that President Bush, in his pursuit of terrorists, had secretly authorized the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on American citizens without first obtaining a warrant from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, as required by federal law. This requirement, which was instituted by Congress in 1978, after the Watergate scandal, was designed to protect civil liberties and curb abuses of executive power, such as Nixon's secret monitoring of political opponents and the F.B.I.'s eavesdropping on Martin Luther King, Jr. Nixon had claimed that as President he had the "inherent authority" to spy on people his Administration deemed enemies, such as the anti-Vietnam War activist Daniel Ellsberg. Both Nixon and the institution of the Presidency had paid a high price for this assumption. But, according to the *Times*, since 2002 the legal checks that Congress constructed to insure that no President would repeat Nixon's actions had been secretly ignored.

According to someone who knows Powell, his comment about the article was terse. "It's Addington," he said. "He doesn't care about the Constitution." Powell was referring to David S. Addington, Vice-President Cheney's chief of staff and his longtime principal legal adviser. Powell's office says that he does not recall making the statement. But his former top aide, Lawrence Wilkerson, confirms that he and Powell shared this opinion of Addington.

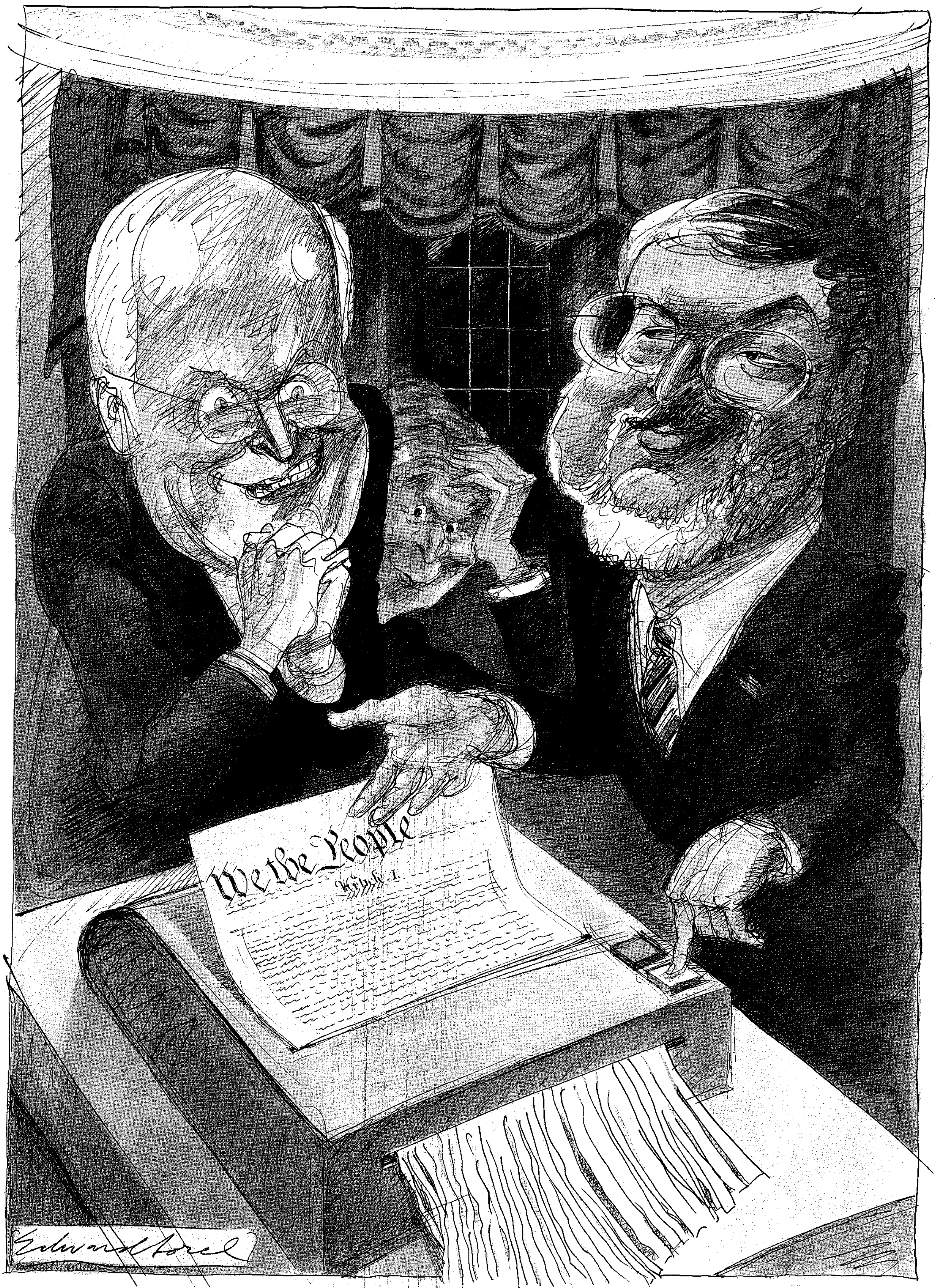
Most Americans, even those who follow politics closely, have probably never heard of Addington. But current and former Administration officials say that he has played a central role in shaping the Administration's legal strategy for the war on terror. Known as the New Paradigm, this strategy rests on a reading of the Constitution that few legal scholars share—namely, that the President, as Commander-in-Chief, has the authority to disregard virtually all previously known legal boundaries, if national security demands it. Under this framework, statutes prohibiting torture, secret detention, and warrantless surveillance have been set aside. A former high-ranking Administration lawyer who worked extensively on national-security issues said that the Administration's legal positions were, to a remarkable degree, "all Addington." Another lawyer, Richard L. Shiffrin, who until 2003 was the Pentagon's deputy general counsel for intelligence, said that Addington was "an unopposable force."

The overarching intent of the New Paradigm, which was put in place after the attacks of September 11th, was to allow the Pentagon to bring terrorists to justice as swiftly as possible. Criminal courts and military courts, with their exacting standards of evidence and emphasis on protecting defendants' rights, were deemed too cumbersome. Instead, the President authorized a system of detention and interrogation that operated outside the international standards for the treatment of prisoners of war established by the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Terror suspects would be tried in a system of military commissions, in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, devised by the executive branch. The Administration designated these suspects not as criminals or as prisoners of war but as "illegal enemy combatants," whose treatment would be ultimately decided by the President. By emphasizing interrogation over due process, the government intended to preëmpt future attacks before they materialized. In November, 2001, Cheney said of the military commissions, "We think it guarantees that we'll have the kind of treatment of these individuals that we believe they deserve."

Yet, almost five years later, this improvised military model, which Addington was instrumental in creating, has achieved very limited results. Not a single terror suspect has been tried before a military commission. Only ten of the more than seven hundred men who have been imprisoned at Guantánamo have been formally charged with any wrongdoing. Earlier this month, three detainees committed suicide in the camp. Germany and Denmark, along with the European Union and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, have called for the prison to be closed, accusing the United States of violating internationally accepted standards for humane treatment and due process. The New Paradigm has also come under serious challenge from the judicial branch. Two years ago, in Rasul v. Bush, the Supreme Court ruled against the Administration's contention that the Guantánamo prisoners were beyond the reach of the U.S. court system and could not challenge their detention. And this week the Court is expected to deliver a decision in Hamdan v. Rumsfeld, a case that questions the legality of the military commissions.

For years, Addington has carried a copy of the U.S. Constitution in his pocket; taped onto the back are photocopies of extra statutes that detail the legal procedures for Presidential succession in times of national emergency. Many constitutional experts, however, question his interpretation of the document, especially his views on Presidential power. Scott Horton, a professor at Columbia Law School, and the head of the New York Bar Association's International Law committee, said that Addington and a small group of Administration

EDWARD SOREL


We the People
Article 1
Edward Sorel

Colin Powell has said that David Addington "doesn't care about the Constitution." But Addington keeps a copy of it in his pocket.

lawyers who share his views had attempted to "overturn two centuries of jurisprudence defining the limits of the executive branch. They've made war a matter of dictatorial power." The historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who defined Nixon as the extreme example of Presidential overreaching in his book "The Imperial Presidency" (1973), said he believes that Bush "is more grandiose than Nixon." As for the Administration's legal defense of torture, which Addington played a central role in formulating, Schlesinger said, "No position taken has done more damage to the American reputation in the world—ever."

Bruce Fein, a Republican legal activist, who voted for Bush in both Presidential elections, and who served as associate deputy attorney general in the Reagan Justice Department, said that Addington and other Presidential legal advisers had "staked out powers that are a universe beyond any other Administration. This President has made claims that are really quite alarming. He's said that there are no restraints on his ability, as he sees it, to collect intelligence, to open mail, to commit torture, and to use electronic surveillance. If you used the President's reasoning, you could shut down Congress for leaking too much. His war powers allow him to declare anyone an illegal combatant. All the world's a battlefield—according to this view, he could kill someone in Lafayette Park if he wants! It's got the sense of Louis XIV: '*I* am the State.'" Richard A. Epstein, a prominent libertarian law professor at the University of Chicago, said, "The President doesn't have the power of a king, or even that of state governors. He's subject to the laws of Congress! The Administration's lawyers are nuts on this issue." He warned of an impending "constitutional crisis," because "their talk of the inherent power of the Presidency seems to be saying that the courts can't stop them, and neither can Congress."

The former high-ranking lawyer for the Administration, who worked closely with Addington, and who shares his political conservatism, said that, in the aftermath of September 11th, "Addington was more like Cheney's agent than like a lawyer. A lawyer sometimes says no." He noted, "Addington never said, 'There is a line you can't cross.'" Although the lawyer supported the President, he felt that his Administration had been led astray. "George W. Bush has been damaged by incredibly bad legal advice," he said.

David Addington is a tall, bespectacled man of forty-nine, who has a thickening middle, a thatch of gray hair, and a trim gray beard, which gives him the look of a sea captain. He is extremely private; he keeps the door of his office locked at all times, colleagues say, because of the national-security documents in his files. He has left almost no public paper trail, and he does not speak to the press or allow photographs to be taken for news stories. (He declined repeated requests to be interviewed for this article.)

In many ways, his influence in Washington defies conventional patterns. Addington doesn't serve the President directly. He has never run for elected office. Although he has been a government lawyer for his entire career, he has never worked in the Justice Department. He is a hawk on defense issues, but he has never served in the military.

There are various plausible explanations for Addington's power, including the force of his intellect and his personality, and his closeness to Cheney, whose political views he clearly shares. Addington has been an ally of Cheney's since the nineteen-eighties, and has been referred to as "Cheney's Cheney," or, less charitably, as "Cheney's hit man." Addington's talent for bureaucratic infighting is such that some of his supporters tend to invoke, with admiration, metaphors involving knives. Juleanna Glover Weiss, Cheney's former press secretary, said, "David is efficient, discreet, loyal, sublimely brilliant, and, as anyone who works with him knows, someone who, in a knife fight, you want covering your back." Bradford Berenson, a former White House lawyer, said, "He's powerful because people know he speaks for the Vice-President, and because he's an extremely smart, creative, and aggressive public official. Some engage in bureaucratic infighting using slaps. Some use knives. David falls into the latter category. You could make the argument that there are some costs. It introduces a little fear into the policymaking process. Views might be more candidly expressed without that fear. But David is like the Marines. No better friend—no worse enemy." People who have sparred with him agree. "He's utterly ruthless," Lawrence Wilkerson said. A former top national-security lawyer said, "He takes a political litmus test of everyone. If you're not sufficiently ideological, he would cut the ground out from under you."

Another reason for Addington's singular role after September 11th is that he offered legal certitude at a moment of great political and legal confusion, in an Administration in which neither the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, nor the national-security adviser was a lawyer. (In the Clinton Administration, all these posts, except for the Vice-Presidency, were held by lawyers at some point.) Neither the Attorney General, John Ashcroft, nor the White House counsel, Alberto Gonzales, had anything like Addington's familiarity with national-security law. Moreover, Ashcroft's relations with the White House were strained, and he was left out of the inner circle that decided the most radical legal strategies in the war on terror. Gonzales had more influence, because of his longtime ties to the President, but, as an Administration lawyer put it, "he was an empty suit. He was weak. And he doesn't know shit about the Geneva Conventions." Participants in meetings in the White House counsel's office, in the days immediately after September 11th, have described Gonzales sitting in a wingback chair, asking questions, while Addington sat directly across from him and held forth. "Gonzales would call the meetings," the former high-ranking lawyer recalled. "But Addington was always the force in the room." Bruce Fein said that the Bush legal team was strikingly unsophisticated. "There is no one of legal stature, certainly no one like Bork, or Scalia, or Elliot Richardson, or Archibald Cox," he said. "It's *frightening*. No one knows the Constitution—certainly not Cheney."

Conventional wisdom holds that September 11th changed everything, including the thinking of Cheney and Addington. Brent Scowcroft, the former national-security adviser, has said of Cheney that he barely recognizes the reasonable politician he knew in the past. But a close look at the twenty-year collaboration between Cheney and Addington suggests that in fact their ideology has not changed much. It seems clear that Addington was able to promote vast executive powers after September 11th in part because he and Cheney had been laying the political groundwork for years. "This preceded 9/11," Fein, who has known both men professionally for decades, said. "I'm not saying that warrantless surveillance did. But the idea of reducing Congress to a cipher was already in play. It was Cheney and Addington's political agenda."

Addington's admirers see him as a selfless patriot, a workaholic defender of a purist interpretation of Presidential power—the necessary answer to threatening times. In 1983, Steve Berry, a Republican lawyer and lobbyist in Washington, hired Addington to work with him as the legislative counsel to the House Intelligence Committee; he has been a career patron and close friend ever since. He said, "I know him well, and I know that if there's a threat he will do everything in his power, within the law, to protect the United States." Berry added that Addington is acutely aware of the legal tensions between liberty and security. "We fought ourselves every day about it," he recalled. But, he said, they concluded that a "strong national security and defense" was the first priority, and that "without a strong defense, there's not much expectation or hope of having other freedoms." He said that there is no better defender of the country than Addington: "I've got a lot of respect for the guy. He's probably the foremost expert on intelligence and national-security law in the nation right now." Berry has a daughter who works in New York City, and he said that when he thinks of her safety he appreciates the efforts that Addington has made to strengthen the country's security. He said, "For Dave, protecting America isn't just a virtue. It's a personal mission. I feel safer just knowing he's where he is."

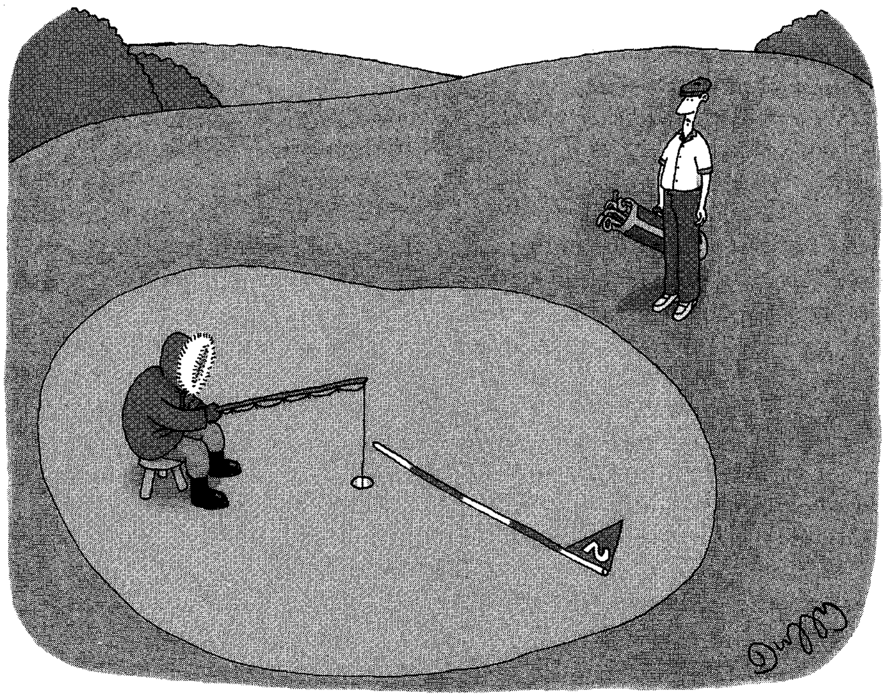
Berry said of his friend, "He's methodical, conscientious, analytical, and logical. And he's as straight an arrow as they come." He noted that Addington refuses to let Berry treat him to a hamburger because it might raise issues of influence-buying—instead, they split the check. Addington, he went on, has a dazzling ability to recall the past twenty-five years' worth of intelligence and national-security legislation. For many years, he kept a vast collection of legal documents in a library in his modest brick-and-clapboard home, in Alexandria, Virginia. One evening several years ago, lightning struck a nearby power line and the house caught fire; much of the archive burned. The fire started at around nine in the evening, and Addington, typically, was still in his office. His wife, Cynthia, and their three daughters were fine, but the loss of his extraordinary collection of papers and political memorabilia, Berry said, "was very hard for him to accept. All you get in this work is memorabilia. There is no cash. But he's the type of guy who gets psychic benefit from going to work every day, making a difference."

Though few people doubt Addington's knowledge of national-security law, even his admirers question his political instincts. "The only time I've seen him wrong is on his political judgment," a former colleague said. "He has a tin ear for political issues. Sometimes the law says one thing, but you have to at least listen to the other side. He will cite case history, case after case. David doesn't see why you have to compromise." Even Berry offered a gentle criticism: "His political skills can be overshadowed by his pursuit of what he feels is legally correct."

Addington has been a hawk on national defense since he was a teen-ager. Leonard Napolitano, an engineer who was one of Addington's close childhood friends, and whose political leanings are more like those of his sister, Janet Napolitano, the Democratic governor of Arizona, joked, "I don't think that in high school David was a believer in the divine right of kings." But, he said, Addington was "always conservative."

The Addingtons were a traditional Catholic military family. They moved frequently; David's father, Jerry, an electrical engineer in the Army, was assigned to a variety of posts, including Saudi Arabia and Washington, D.C., where he worked with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As a teen-ager, Addington told a friend that he hoped to live in Washington himself when he grew up. Jerry Addington, a 1940 graduate of West Point who won a Bronze Star during the Second World War, also served in Korea and at the North American Air Defense Command, in Colorado; he reached the rank of brigadier general before he retired, in

"Do you realize we've invited two guys who suck all the air out of the room?"



1970, when David was thirteen. David attended public high school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and his father began a second career, teaching middle-school math. His mother, Eleanore, was a housewife; the family lived in a ranch house in a middle-class subdivision. She still lives there; Jerry died in 1994. "We are an extremely close family," one of Addington's three older sisters, Linda, recalled recently. "Discipline was very important for us, and faith was very important. It was about being ethical—the *right* thing to do whether anyone else does it or not. I see that in Dave." She was reluctant to say more. "Dave is most deliberate about his privacy," she added.

Socially, Napolitano recalled, he and Addington were "the brains, or nerds." Addington stood out for wearing black socks with shorts. He and his friends were not particularly athletic, and they liked to play poker all night on weekends, stopping early in the morning for breakfast. Their circle included some girls, until the boys found them "too distracting to our interest in cards," Napolitano recalled.

When he and Addington were in high school, Napolitano said, the Vietnam War was in its final stages, and "there was a certain amount of 'Challenge authority' and alcohol and drugs, but they weren't issues in our group." Addington's high-school history teacher, Irwin Hoffman, whom Napolitano recalled as wonderful, exacting, and "a flaming liberal," said that Addington felt strongly that America "should have stayed and won the Vietnam War, despite the fact that we were losing." Hoffman, who is retired, added, "The boy seemed terribly, terribly bright. He wrote well, and he was very verbal, not at all reluctant to express his opinions. He was pleasant and quite handsome. He also had a very strong sarcastic streak. He was scornful of anyone who said anything that was naïve, or less than bright. His sneers were almost palpable."

Addington graduated in 1974, the year that Nixon resigned. In the aftermath of Watergate, liberal Democratic reformers imposed tighter restraints on the President and reined in the C.I.A., whose excesses were critiqued in congressional hearings, led by Senator Frank Church and Representative Otis Pike, that exposed details of assassination plots, coup attempts, mind-control experiments, and domestic spying. Congress passed a series of measures aimed at reinvigorating the system of checks and balances, including an expanded Freedom of Information Act and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, the law requiring judicial review before foreign suspects inside the country could be wiretapped. It also created the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, which oversee all covert C.I.A. activities.

After high school, Addington pursued an ambition that he had had for years: to join the military. Rather than attending West Point, as his father had, he enrolled in the U.S. Naval Academy, in Annapolis. But he dropped out before the end of his freshman year. He went home and, according to Napolitano, worked in a Long John Silver's restaurant. "The academy wasn't academically challenging enough for him," Napolitano said.

Addington went to Georgetown University, graduating summa cum laude, in 1978, from the school of foreign service; he went on to earn honors at Duke Law School. After graduating, in 1981, he married Linda Werling, a graduate student in pharmacology. The marriage ended in divorce. His current wife, Cynthia, takes care of their three girls full-time.

Soon after leaving Duke, Addington started his first job, in the general counsel's office at the C.I.A. A former top agency lawyer who later worked with Addington said that Addington strongly opposed the reform movements that followed Vietnam and Watergate. "Addington was too young to be fully affected by the Vietnam War," the lawyer said. "He was shaped by the postwar, post-Watergate years instead. He thought the Presidency was too weakened. He's a believer that in foreign policy the executive is meant to be quite powerful."

These views were shared by Dick Cheney, who served as chief of staff in the Ford Administration. "On a range of executive-power issues, Cheney thought that Presidents from Nixon onward yielded too quickly," Michael J. Malbin, a political scientist who has advised Cheney on the issue of executive power, said. Kenneth Adelman, who was a high-ranking Pentagon official under Ford, said that the fall of Saigon, in 1975, was "very painful for Dick. He believed that Vietnam could have been saved—maybe—if Congress hadn't cut off funding. He was against that kind of interference."

Jane Harman, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, who has spent considerable time working with Cheney and Addington in recent years, believes that they are still fighting Watergate. "They're focussed on

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restoring the Nixon Presidency," she said. "They've persuaded themselves that, following Nixon, things went all wrong." She said that in meetings Addington is always courtly and pleasant. But when it comes to accommodating Congress "his answer is always no."

In a revealing interview that Cheney gave last December to reporters travelling with him to Oman, he explained, "I do have the view that over the years there had been an erosion of Presidential power and authority. . . . A lot of the things around Watergate and Vietnam both, in the seventies, served to erode the authority I think the President needs." Further, Cheney explained, it was his express aim to restore the balance of power. The President needed to be able to act as Alexander Hamilton had described it in the Federalist Papers, with "secrecy" and "despatch"—especially, Cheney said, "in the day and age we live in . . . with the threats we face." He added, "I believe in a strong, robust executive authority, and I think the world we live in demands it."

At the C.I.A., where Addington spent two years, he focussed on curtailing the ability of Congress to interfere in intelligence gathering. "He was a rookie, plenty bright," Frederick Hitz, another C.I.A. lawyer, who later became Inspector General, recalled. After the Church and Pike hearings, legislators came up with hundreds of pages of oversight recommendations, he said. "Addington was very pro-agency. He was trying to figure out how to comply with government oversight without getting hog-tied." Addington viewed the public airings of the C.I.A.'s covert activities as "an absolute disaster," Berry recalled. "We both felt that Congress did great harm by flinging open the doors to operational secrets."

When Addington joined the C.I.A., it was directed by William J. Casey, who also regarded congressional constraints on the agency as impediments to be circumvented. His sentiment about congressional overseers was best captured during a hearing about covert actions in Central America, when he responded to tough questioning by muttering the word "assholes." After Reagan's election in 1980, the executive branch was dominated by conservative Republicans, while the House was governed by liberal Democrats. The two parties fought intensely over Central America; the Reagan Administration was determined to overthrow the leftist Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Using their constitutional authority over appropriations, the Democrats in Congress forbade the C.I.A. to spend federal funds to support the Contras, a rightist rebel group. But Casey's attitude, as Berry recalled it, was "We're gonna fund these freedom fighters whether Congress wants us to or not." Berry, then the staff director for the Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee, asked Casey for help in fighting the Democrats. Soon afterward, Addington joined Berry on Capitol Hill.

When the Iran-Contra scandal broke, in 1986, it exposed White House arms deals and foreign fund-raising designed to help the anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua. Members of Congress were furious. Summoned to Capitol Hill, Casey lied, denying that funds for the Contras had been solicited from any foreign governments, although he knew that the Saudis, among others, had agreed to give millions of dollars to the Contras, at the request of the White House. Even within the Reagan Administration, the foreign funding was controversial. Secretary of State George Shultz had warned Reagan that he might be committing an impeachable offense. But, under Casey's guidance, the White House went ahead with the plan; Shultz, having expressed misgivings, was not told. It was a bureaucratic tactic that Addington reprised after September 11th, when Powell was left out of key deliberations about the treatment of detainees. Lawrence Wilkerson, Powell's aide, said that he was aware of Addington's general strategy: "We had heard that, behind our backs, he was saying that Powell was 'soft, but easy to get around.' "

The Iran-Contra scandal substantially weakened Reagan's popularity and, eventually, seven people were convicted of seventeen felonies. Cheney, who was then a Republican congressman from Wyoming, worried that the scandal would further undercut Presidential authority. In late 1986, he became the ranking Republican on a House select committee that was investigating the scandal, and he commissioned a report on Reagan's support of the Contras. Addington, who had become an expert in intelligence law, contributed legal research. The scholarly-sounding but politically outlandish Minority Report, released in 1987, argued that Congress—not the President—had overstepped its authority, by encroaching on the President's foreign-policy powers. The President, the report said, had been driven by "a legitimate frustration with abuses of power and irresolution by the legislative branch." The Minority Report sanctioned the President's actions to a surprising degree, considering the number of criminal charges that resulted from the scandal. The report also defended the legality of ignoring congressional intelligence oversight, arguing that "the President has the Constitutional and statutory authority to withhold notifying Congress of covert actions under rare conditions." And it condemned "legislative hostage taking," noting that "Congress must realize . . . that the power of the purse does not make it supreme" in matters of war. In his December interview with reporters, Cheney proudly cited this document. "If you want reference to an obscure text, go look at the minority views that were filed in the Iran-Contra committee, the Iran-Contra report, in about 1987," he said. "Part of the argument was whether the President had the authority to do what was done in the Reagan years."

Addington and Cheney became a formidable team, but it was soon clear that Addington would not join Cheney as a politician. Adelman recalled Addington's personality as "dour," adding that, "unlike with Dick, I never saw much of a sense of humor. Cheney can be witty and funny. David is sober. I didn't see him at social events much." But, he added, "Dick wasn't looking for friends at work. He was looking for performance. And David delivers. He's efficient and dedicated. He's a doer." He went on, "Cheney's not a lawyer, so he would defer to David on the law."

In 1989, President George H. W. Bush appointed Cheney Secretary of Defense. Cheney hired Addington first as his special assistant and, later, as the

Pentagon's general counsel. At the Pentagon, Addington became widely known as Cheney's gatekeeper—a stickler for process who controlled the flow of documents to his boss. Using a red felt-tipped pen, he covered his colleagues' memos with comments before returning them for rewrites. His editing invariably made arguments sharper, smarter, and more firm in their defense of Cheney's executive powers, a former military official who worked with him said.

At the Pentagon, Addington took a particular interest in the covert actions of the Special Forces. A former colleague recalled that, after attending a demonstration by Special Forces officers, he mocked the C.I.A., which was constrained by oversight laws. "This is how *real* covert operations are done," he said. (After September 11th, the Pentagon greatly expanded its covert intelligence operations; these programs have less congressional oversight than those of the C.I.A.) Cheney, throughout his tenure as Defense Secretary, shared with Addington a pessimistic view of the Soviet Union. Both remained skeptical of Gorbachev long after the State Department, the national-security adviser, and the C.I.A. had concluded that he was a reformer. "They were always, like, 'Whoa—beware the Bear!' " Wilkerson recalled. They immersed themselves in "continuity of government exercises"—studying with unusual intensity how the government might survive a nuclear attack. According to "Rise of the Vulcans," a history of the period by James Mann, Cheney, more than once, spent the night in an underground bunker.

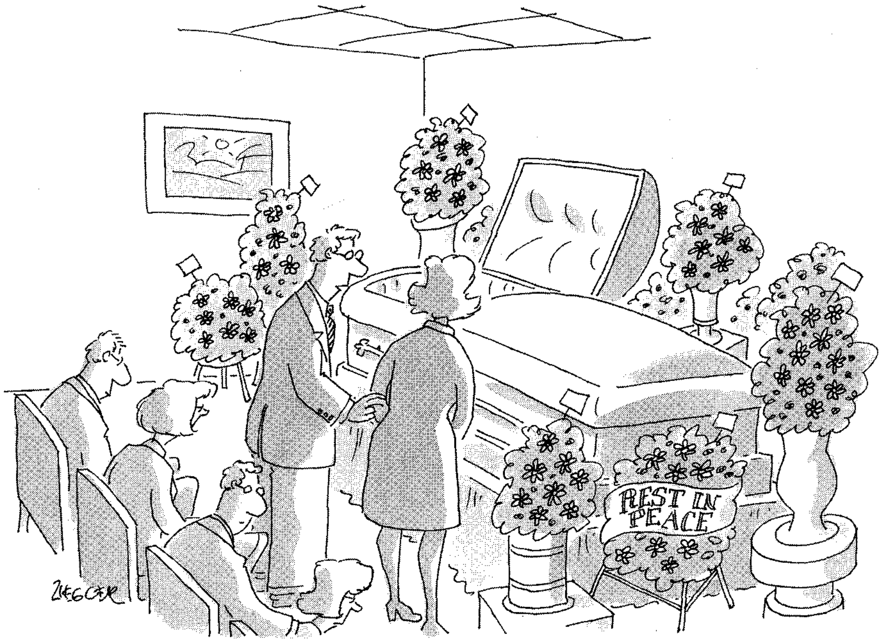
A decade later, when hijacked planes slammed into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, Addington, perhaps more than anyone else in the U.S. government, was ready to act. During the Clinton Presidency, he had worked as a lawyer for various business interests, such as the American Trucking Associations, and in 1994 he had led an exploratory Presidential campaign for Cheney, who decided against running. Once Cheney became Vice-President, Addington helped oversee the transition, setting up the most powerful Vice-Presidency in America's history. Addington's high-school friend Leonard Napolitano said Addington told him that he and Cheney were merging the Vice-President's office with the President's into a single "Executive Office," instead of having "two different camps." Napolitano added, "David said that Cheney saw the Vice-President as the executive and implementer of the President." Addington created a system to insure that virtually all important documents relating to national-security matters were seen by the Vice-President's office. The former high-ranking Administration lawyer said that Addington regularly attended White House legal meetings with the C.I.A. and the National Security Agency. He received copies of all National Security Council documents, including internal memos from the staff. And, as a former top official in the Defense Department, he exerted influence over the legal office at the Pentagon, helping his protégé William J. Haynes secure the position of general counsel. A former national-security lawyer, speaking of the Pentagon's legal office, said, "It's obvious that Addington runs the whole operation."

"Are you multitasking me?"

In the days after September 11th, a half-dozen White House lawyers had heated discussions about how to frame the Administration's legal response to the attacks. Bradford Berenson, one of the participants, recalled how "raw" feelings were at the time: "There were thousands of bereaved American families. Everyone was expecting additional attacks. The only planes in the air were military. At a moment like that, there's an intense focus on responsibility and accountability. Preventing another attack should always be within the law. But if you have to err on the side of being too aggressive or not aggressive enough, you'd err by being too aggressive."

Berry said that Addington felt this keenly. "I've talked to David about this a little. Psychologically, it's really taxing to read every day not about one or two but about a dozen, or two dozen, legitimate reports about efforts to take out U.S. citizens. . . . There's a little bit of a bunker mentality that set in among some of the national-security-policy officials after 9/11."

Almost immediately, other Administration lawyers noticed that Addington dominated the internal debates. His assumption, shared by other hard-line lawyers in the White House counsel's office and in the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, was that the criminal-



"That get-well card we sent certainly was a waste of money."

justice system was insufficient to handle the threat from terrorism. The matter was settled without debate, Berenson recalled: "There was a consensus that we had to move from retribution and punishment to preëmption and prevention. Only a warfare model allows that approach."

Richard Shiffrin, the former Pentagon lawyer, said that during a tense White House meeting held in the Situation Room just a few days after September 11th "all of us felt under a great deal of pressure to be willing to consider even the most extraordinary proposals. The C.I.A., the N.S.C., the State Department, the Pentagon, and the Justice Department all had people there. Addington was particularly strident. He'd sit, listen, and then say, 'No, that's not right.' He was particularly doctrinaire and ideological. He didn't recognize the wisdom of the other lawyers. He was always right. He didn't listen. He knew the answers." The details of the discussion are classified, Shiffrin said, but he left with the impression that Addington "doesn't believe there should be co-equal branches." Another participant recalled, "If you favored international law, you were in danger of being called 'soft on terrorism' by Addington." He added that Addington's manner in meetings was "very insistent and very loud." Yet another participant said that, whenever he cautioned against executive-branch overreaching, Addington would respond brusquely, "There you go again, giving away the President's power."

Some of the protests from Democrats about the Administration's legal arguments and some of the declarations of high principle from Republicans are mere partisan gestures. Both sides have changed their views about the need for a strong President, depending on whether they were in power. "It's a matter of degree," the liberal Princeton historian Sean Wilentz said. "War always expands the powers of the Presidency. And Presidents always overreach." Lincoln infamously suspended habeas-corpus rights during the Civil War, locking up thousands of Confederate sympathizers without due process, and Franklin D. Roosevelt interned more than a hundred thousand innocent Japanese-Americans. "Someone said that this Administration is monarchical," Wilentz added. "That's just rhetoric. We're not a dictatorship. At the same time, this White House has assumed powers for itself that no previous Administration has done." Bush's defenders frequently cite the example of Lincoln as a justification for placing national security above the rule of law. But Schlesinger, in his book "War and the American Presidency" (2004), points out that Lincoln never "claimed an inherent and routine right to do what [he] did." The Bush White House, he told me, has seized on these historical aberrations and turned them into a doctrine of Presidential prerogative.

On September 25th, the Office of Legal Counsel issued a memo declaring that the President had inherent constitutional authority to take whatever military action he deemed necessary, not just in response to the September 11th attacks but also in the prevention of any future attacks from terrorist groups, whether they were linked to Al Qaeda or not. The memo's broad definition of the enemy went beyond that of Congress, which, on September 14th, had passed legislation authorizing the President to use military force against "nations, organizations, or persons" directly linked to the attacks. The memo was written by John Yoo, a lawyer in the Office of Legal Counsel who worked closely with Addington, and said, in part, "The power of the President is at its zenith under the Constitution when the President is directing military operations of the armed forces, because the power of the Commander-in-Chief is assigned solely to the President." The memo acknowledged that Article I of the Constitution gives Congress the power to declare war, but argued that it was a misreading to assume that the article gives Congress the lead role in making war. Instead, the memo said, "it is beyond question that the President has the plenary Constitutional power to take such military actions as he deems necessary and appropriate to respond to the terrorist attacks upon the United States on September 11, 2001." It concluded, "These decisions, under our Constitution, are for the President alone to make."

Another memo sanctioned torture when the President deems it necessary; yet another claimed that there were virtually no valid legal prohibitions against the inhumane treatment of foreign prisoners held by the C.I.A. outside the U.S. Most of these decisions, according to many Administration officials who were involved in the process, were made in secrecy, and the customary interagency debate and vetting procedures were sidestepped. Addington either drafted the memos himself or advised those who

BARD
Shanahan

"I was motor-home-schooled."

were drafting them. "Addington's fingerprints were all over these policies," said Wilkerson, who, as Powell's top aide, later assembled for the Secretary a dossier of internal memos detailing the decision-making process.

On November 13, 2001, an executive order setting up the military commissions was issued under Bush's signature. The decision stunned Powell; the national-security adviser, Condoleezza Rice; the highest-ranking lawyer at the C.I.A.; and many judge advocate generals, or JAGs, the top lawyers in the military services. None of them had been consulted. Michael Chertoff, the head of the Justice Department's criminal division, who had argued for trying terror suspects in the U.S. courts, was also bypassed. And the order surprised John Bellinger III, the National Security Council legal adviser and deputy White House counsel, who had been formally asked to help create a legal method for trying foreign terror suspects. According to multiple sources, Addington secretly usurped the process. He and a few hand-picked associates, including Bradford Berenson and Timothy Flanigan, a lawyer in the White House counsel's office, wrote the executive order creating the commissions. Moreover, Addington did not show drafts of the order to Powell or Rice, who, the senior Administration lawyer said, was incensed when she learned about her exclusion.

The order proclaimed a state of "extraordinary emergency," and announced that the rules for the military commissions would be dictated by the Secretary of Defense, without review by Congress or the courts. The commissions could try any foreign person the President or his representatives deemed to have "engaged in" or "abetted" or "conspired to commit" terrorism, without offering the right to seek an appeal from anyone but the President or the Secretary of Defense. Detainees would be treated "humanely," and would be given "full and fair trials," the order said. Yet the order continued that "it is not practicable" to apply "the principles of law and the rules of evidence generally recognized in the trial of criminal cases in the United States district courts." The death penalty, for example, could be imposed even if there was a split verdict. Moreover, in December, 2001, the Department of Defense circulated internal memos suggesting that, in the commission system, defendants would have only limited rights to confront their accusers, see all the evidence against them, or be present during their trials. There would be no right to remain silent, and hearsay evidence would be admissible, as would evidence obtained through physical coercion. Guilt did not need to be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. The order firmly established that terrorism would henceforth be approached on a war footing, endowing the President with enhanced powers.

The precedent for the order was an arcane 1942 case, ex parte Quirin, in which Franklin Roosevelt created a military commission to try eight Nazi saboteurs who had infiltrated the United States via submarines. The Supreme Court upheld the case, 8–0, but even the conservative Justice Antonin Scalia has called it "not this Court's finest hour." Roosevelt was later criticized for creating a sham process. Moreover, while he used military commissions to try a handful of suspects who had already admitted their guilt, the Bush White House was proposing expanding the process to cover thousands of "enemy combatants." It was also ignoring the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which, having codified procedures for courts-martial in 1951, had rendered Quirin out of date.

Berenson said, "The legal foundation was very strong. F.D.R.'s order establishing military commissions had been upheld by the Supreme Court. This was almost identical. What we underestimated was the extent to which the culture had shifted beneath us since World War Two." Concerns about civil liberties and human rights, and anger over Vietnam and Watergate, he said, had turned public opinion against a strong executive branch: "But Addington thought military commissions had to be a tool at the President's disposal."

Rear Admiral Donald Guter, who was the Navy's chief JAG until June, 2002, said that he and the other JAGs, who were experts in the laws of war, tried unsuccessfully to amend parts of the military-commission plan when they learned of it, days before the order was formally signed by the President. "But we were marginalized," he said. "We were warning them that we had this long tradition of military justice, and we didn't want to tarnish it. The treatment of detainees was a huge issue. They didn't want to hear it." In a 2004 report in the *Times,* Guter said that when he and the other JAGs told Haynes that they needed more information, Haynes replied, "No, you don't." (Haynes's office offered no comment.)

At the Defense Department, Shiffrin, the deputy general counsel for intelligence, and a career lawyer rather than a political appointee, was taken aback when Haynes showed him the order. Earlier in Shiffrin's career, at the Justice Department, his office had been in the same room where the Nazi defendants were tried, and he had become interested in the case, which he said he regarded as "one of the worst Supreme Court cases ever." He recalled informing Haynes that he was skeptical of the Administration's invocation of Quirin. "Gee, this is problematic," Shiffrin told him.

Marine Major Dan Mori, the uniformed lawyer who has been assigned to defend David Hicks, one of the ten terror suspects in Guantánamo who have been charged, said of the commissions, "It was a political stunt. The Administration clearly didn't know anything about military law or the laws of war. I think they were clueless that there even *was* a U.C.M.J. and a Manual for Courts-Martial! The fundamental problem is that the rules were constructed by people with a vested interest in conviction."

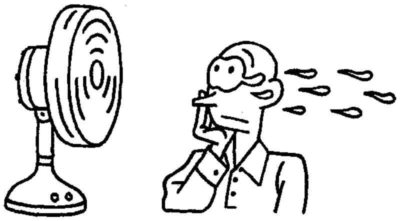
Mori said that the charges against the detainees reflected a profound legal confusion. "A military commission can try only violations of the laws of *war*," he said. "But the Administration's lawyers didn't understand this." Under federal criminal statutes, for example, conspiring to commit terrorist acts is a crime. But, as the Nuremburg trials that followed the Second World War established, under the laws of war it is not, since all soldiers could be charged with conspiring to fight for their side. Yet, Mori said, a charge of conspiracy "is the only thing there is in many cases at Guantánamo—guilt by association. So you've got this big problem." He added, "I hope that nobody confuses military justice with these 'military commissions.' This is a political process, set up by the *civilian* leadership. It's inept, incompetent, and improper."

Under attack from defense lawyers like Mori, the military commissions have been tied up in the courts almost since the order was issued. Bellinger and others fought to make the commissions fairer, so that they could withstand court challenges, and the Pentagon gradually softened its rules. But Administration lawyers involved in the process said that Addington resisted at every turn. He insisted, for instance, on maintaining the admissibility of statements obtained through coercion, or even torture. In meetings, he argued that officials in charge of the military commissions should be given maximum flexibility to decide whether to include such evidence. "Torture isn't important to Addington as a scientific matter, good or bad, or whether it works or not," the Administration lawyer, who is familiar with these debates, said. "It's more about his philosophy of Presidential power. He thinks that if the President wants torture he should get torture. He always argued for 'maximum flexibility.' "

Last month, Addington lost this internal battle. The Administration rescinded the provision allowing coerced testimony, after even the military officials overseeing the commissions supported the reform. According to a senior Administration legal adviser who participated in discussions about the commissions, Addington remained opposed to the change. "He wanted no changes," the lawyer said. "He said the rules were good, right from the start." Addington accused officials who were trying to reform the rules of "giving away the President's prerogatives."

President Bush has blamed the legal challenges for the delays in prosecuting Guantánamo detainees. But many lawyers, even some inside the Administration, believe that the challenges were inevitable, considering the dubious constitutionality of the commissions. The Supreme Court's ruling in the Hamdan case is expected to establish whether the commissions meet basic standards of due process. The Administration lawyer isn't sanguine about the outcome. "It shows again that Addington overreached," he said.

Meanwhile, Addington has fought tirelessly to stem reform of other controversial aspects of the New Paradigm, such as the detention and interrogation of terror suspects. Last year, he and Cheney led an unsuccessful campaign to defeat an amendment, proposed by Senator John McCain, to ban the abusive treatment of detainees held by the military or the C.I.A. Government officials who have worked closely with Addington say he insists that legal flexibility is necessary, because of the iniquity of the enemy; moreover, he does not believe that the legal positions taken by the Bush Administration in the war on terror have damaged the country's international reputation. "He's a very smart guy, but he gives no credibility to those who say these policies are hurting us around the world," the senior Administration legal adviser said. "His feeling is that there are no costs. He'll say people are just whining. He thinks most of them would be against us no matter what." In Addington's view, critics of the Administration's aggressive legal policies are just political enemies of the President.



Yet, from the start, some of the sharpest critics of detainee-treatment policies have been military and law-enforcement officials inside the Bush Administration; people close to it, like McCain; and our foreign allies. Just a few months after the Guantánamo detention centers were established, members of the Administration began receiving reports that questioned whether all the prisoners there were really, as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had labelled them, "the worst of the worst." Guter said that the Pentagon had originally planned to screen the suspects individually on the battlefields in Afghanistan; such "Article 5 hearings" are a provision of the Geneva Conventions. But the White House cancelled the hearings, which had been standard protocol during the previous fifty years, including in the first Gulf War. In a January 25, 2002, legal memorandum, Administration lawyers dismissed the Geneva Conventions as "obsolete," "quaint," and irrelevant to the war on terror. The memo was signed by Gonzales, but the Administration lawyer said he believed that "Addington and Flanigan were behind it." The memo argued that all Taliban and Al Qaeda detainees were illegal enemy combatants, which eliminated "any argument regarding the need for case-by-case determination of P.O.W. status." Critics claim that the lack of a careful screening process led some innocent detainees to be imprisoned. "Article 5 hearings would have cost them nothing," the Administration lawyer, who was involved in the process, said. "They just wanted to make a point on executive power—that the President can designate them *all* enemy combatants if he wants to."

Guter, the Navy JAG, said that, before long, he and other military experts began to wonder whether the reason they weren't getting much useful intelligence from Guantánamo was that, as he puts it, "it wasn't there." Guter, who was in the Pentagon on September 11th, said, "I don't have a sympathetic bone in my body for the terrorists. But I just wanted to make sure we were getting the right people—the real terrorists. And I wanted to make sure we were doing it in a way consistent with our values."

While the JAGs' questions about the treatment of detainees went largely unheeded, he said, the C.I.A. was simultaneously raising similar concerns. In the summer of 2002, the agency had sent an Arabic-speaking analyst to Guantánamo to find out why more intelligence wasn't being collected, and, after interviewing several dozen prisoners, he had come back with bad news: more than half the detainees, he believed, didn't belong there. He wrote a devastating classified report, which reached General John Gordon, the deputy national-security adviser for combatting terrorism. In a series of meetings at the White House, Gordon, Bellinger, and other officials warned Addington and Gonzales that potentially innocent people had been locked up in Guantánamo and would be indefinitely. "This is a violation of basic notions of American fairness," Gordon and Bellinger argued. "Isn't that what we're about as a country?" Addington's response, sources familiar with the meetings said, was "These are 'enemy combatants.' Please use that term. They've all been through a screening process. We don't have anything to talk about."

A former Administration official said of Addington's response, "It seemed illogical. How could you deny the possibility that one or more people were locked up who shouldn't be? There were old people, sick people—why do we want to keep them?" At the meeting, Gordon and Bellinger argued, "The American public understands that wars are confusing and exceptional things happen. But the American public will expect some due process."

Addington and Gonzales dismissed this concern. The former Administration official recalled that Addington was "the dominant voice. It was a non-debate, in his view." The confrontation made clear, though, that Addington had been informed early that there were problems at Guantánamo. "There wasn't a lack of knowledge or understanding," the former official said.

Addington has proved deft at outmaneuvering his critics. Documents embarrassing to Addington's opponents have been leaked to the press, if not necessarily by him. A top-secret N.S.C. memo describing Powell's request to reconsider the suspension of the Geneva Conventions appeared in the Washington *Times* the day after it was circulated to the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, and the Vice-President; the article cited unnamed sources who accused Powell of "bowing to pressure from the political left." The Administration lawyer said, "The way Addington works, he controls the flow of information very tightly." Addington chastised a Justice Department official who showed a legal opinion on the treatment of detainees to the State Department. He repeatedly directed Gonzales, the White House counsel, to keep Bellinger, the N.S.C. lawyer, out of meetings about national-security issues. "Lip-lock" is the word Addington's old Pentagon colleague Sean O'Keefe, now the chancellor of Louisiana State University, used to describe his discretion. "He's like Cheney," O'Keefe said. "You can't get anything out of him with a crowbar." The Administration lawyer said, "He's a bully, pure and simple." Several talented top lawyers who challenged Addington on important legal matters concerning the war on terror, including Patrick Philbin, James Comey, and Jack Goldsmith, left the Administration under stressful circumstances. Other reform-minded government lawyers who clashed with Addington, including Bellinger and Matthew Waxman, both of whom were at the N.S.C. during Bush's first term, have moved to the State Department.

Waxman, a young lawyer who headed the Pentagon's office of detainee affairs, departed soon after he had a major confrontation with Addington over the issue of clarifying military rules for the treatment of prisoners. Waxman believed that international standards for the humane treatment of detainees should be followed, and argued for reforms in the Army Field Manual. He hoped to reinstate the basic standards that are specified in the Geneva Conventions. This meant the prohibition of torture, overt acts of violence, and "outrages on personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment." Although the Vice-President's office is not part of the military chain of command, last September Addington summoned Waxman to his office and berated him. Waxman declined to comment on the incident, but a former colleague in the Pentagon, in whom Waxman confided, said that Addington accused Waxman of wanting to fight the war on terror his own way, rather than the President's way. The Army Field Manual still hasn't been revised, and, according to those involved, Addington and his protégé Haynes remain the major obstacles.

Last fall, Richard Shiffrin, the Pentagon lawyer who was left out of the Administration's initial discussions of the military commissions, learned from the *Times* about the Administration's decision to sanction warrantless domestic electronic surveillance by the National Security Agency. This was remarkable, because Shiffrin was the Pentagon lawyer in charge of supervising the N.S.A.'s legal advisers. "It was exceptional that I didn't know about it—extraordinary," Shiffrin said. "In the prior Administration, on anything involving N.S.A. legal issues I'd have been made aware. And I should have been in this one."

Shortly after September 11th, Addington and Cheney, without alerting Shiffrin, held meetings with top N.S.A. lawyers in the Vice-President's office and told them that the President, as Commander-in-Chief, had the authority to override the FISA statutes and not seek warrants from the special court. According to the *Times*, Addington and Cheney pushed the N.S.A. to engage in practices that the agency thought were illegal, such as the warrantless wiretapping of American suspects making domestic calls. General Michael Hayden, the former head of the N.S.A., who was recently confirmed as director of the C.I.A., has denied being pressured. Shiffrin, however, doubted that the N.S.A. lawyers were expert enough in Article II of the Constitution, which defines the President's powers, to argue back. He described the Administration's legal arguments on wiretapping as "close calls."

Others are more critical. Fourteen prominent constitutional scholars, representing a range of political views, recently wrote an open letter to Congress, claiming that the N.S.A. surveillance program "appears on its face to violate existing law." The scholars noted that Bush had made no effort to amend the FISA law to suit national-security needs—he simply ignored it. The Republican legal activist Bruce Fein said, "What makes this so sinister is that the members of this Administration have unchecked power. They don't *care* if the wiretapping is legal or not." But the former high-ranking Administration lawyer suggested that the situation is more serious than an intentional infraction of the law. "It's not that they think they're skirting the law," he said. "They think that this *is* the law."

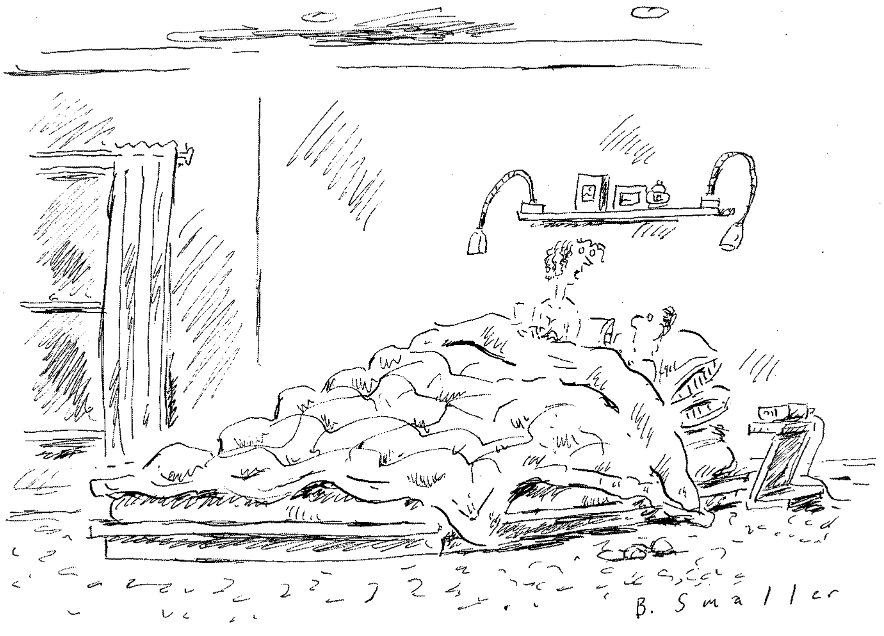
Fein suggested that the only way Congress will be able to reassert its power is by cutting off funds to the executive branch for programs that it thinks are illegal. But this approach has been tried, and here, too, Addington has had the last word. John Murtha, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, put a provision in the Pentagon's appropriations bills for 2005 and 2006 forbidding the use of federal funds for any intelligence-gathering that violates the Fourth Amendment, which protects the privacy of American citizens. The White House, however, took exception to Congress's effort to cut off funds. When President Bush signed the appropriations bills into law, he appended "signing statements" asserting that the Commander-in-Chief had the right to collect intelligence in any way he deemed necessary. The signing statement for the 2005 budget, for instance, noted that the executive branch would "construe" the spending limit only "in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority as Commander-in-Chief, including for the conduct of intelligence operations."

According to the Boston *Globe*, Addington has been the "leading architect" of these signing statements, which have been added to more than seven hundred and fifty laws. He reportedly scrutinizes every bill before President Bush signs it, searching for any language that might impinge on Presidential power. These wars of words are yet another battlefront between Addington and Congress, and some constitutional scholars find them troubling. Few of the signing statements were noticed until one of them was slipped into Bush's signing of the McCain amendment. The language was legal boilerplate, reserving the right to construe the legislation only as it was consistent with the Constitution. But, considering that Cheney's office had waged, and lost, a public fight to defeat the McCain amendment democratically—the vote in the Senate was 90–9—the signing statement seemed sneaky and subversive.

Earlier this month, the American Bar Association voted to investigate whether President Bush had exceeded his constitutional authority by reserving the right to ignore portions of laws that he has signed. Richard Epstein, the University of Chicago law professor, said, "What's frightening to me is that this Administration is always willing to push the conventions to the limits—and beyond. With his signing statements, I think the President just goes too far. If you sign these things with a caveat, do the inferior officers follow the law or the caveat?"

Bruce Fein argues that Addington's signing statements are "unconstitutional as a strategy," because the Founding Fathers wanted Presidents to veto legislation openly if they thought the bills were unconstitutional. Bush has not vetoed a single bill since taking office. "It's part of the balancing process," Fein said. "It's about accountability. If you veto something, everyone knows where you stand. But this President wants to do it sotto voce. He wants to give the image that he's accommodating on torture, and then reserves the right to torture anyway."

David Addington is a satisfactory lawyer, Fein said, but a less than satisfactory student of American history, which, for a public servant of his influence, matters more. "If you read the Federalist Papers, you can see how rich in history they are," he said. "The Founders really understood the history of what people *did* with power, going back to Greek and Roman and Biblical times. Our political heritage is to be skeptical of executive power, because, in particular, there was skepticism of King George III. But Cheney and Addington are not students of history. If they were, they'd know that the Founding Fathers would be shocked by what they've done." ♦



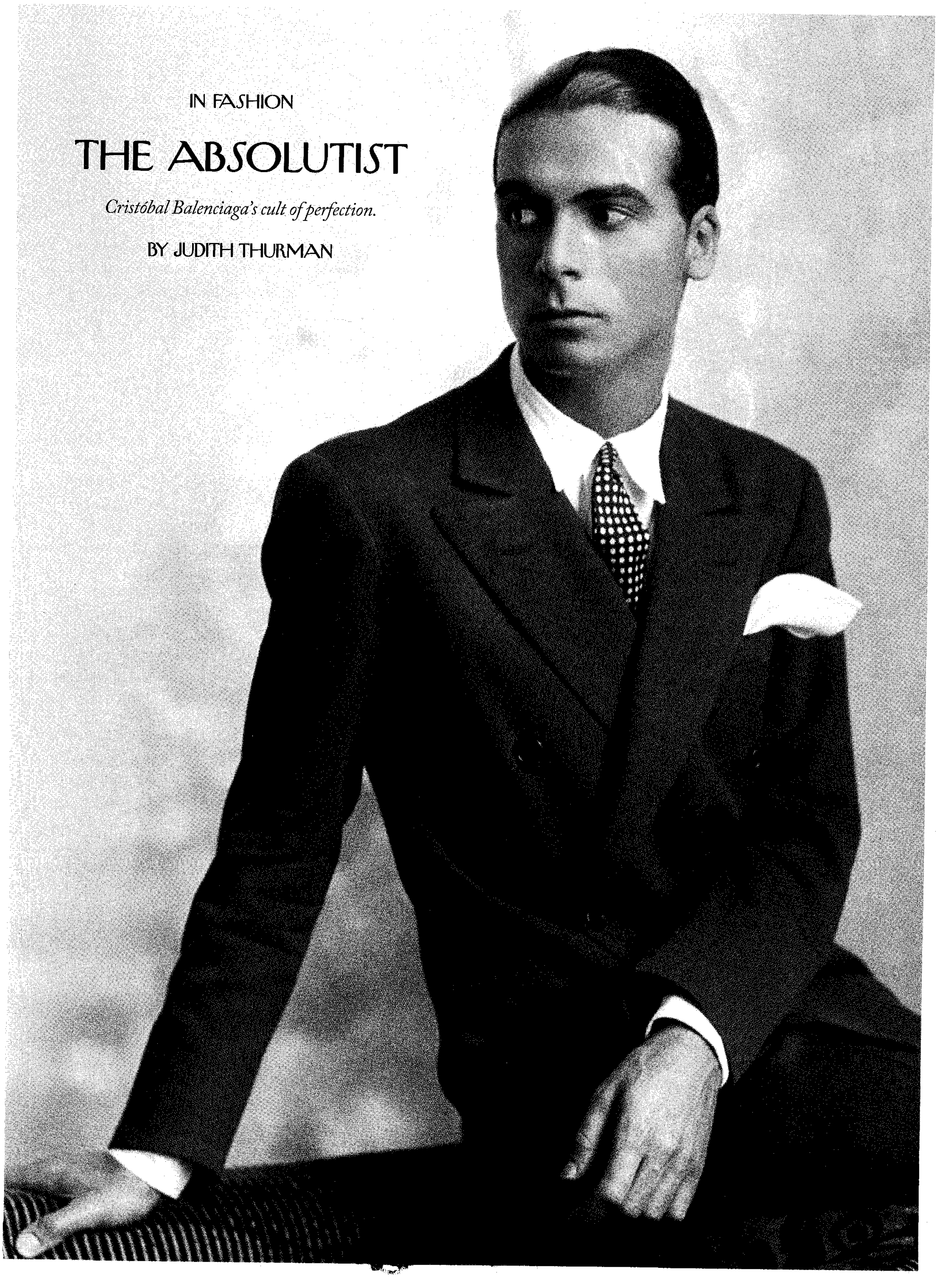
"Yes, it was good for me—not as good as it was the last time, but probably better than it's going to be the time after this."

IN FASHION

THE ABSOLUTIST

Cristóbal Balenciaga's cult of perfection.

BY JUDITH THURMAN



In March, 1956, CBS aired an episode of the "I Love Lucy" show—"Lucy Gets a Paris Gown"—in which the Ricardo and Mertz families explore the City of Light. Lucy and Ethel are determined to see a fashion show, so they persuade Ricky to wangle four invitations from the exclusive couturier Jacques Marcel. Fred, however, alerts his buddy to the horrifying price of a Marcel creation: five hundred bucks. After the show, the husbands deliver their critique: the dresses look like potato sacks. Undeterred, Lucy goes on a hunger strike until Ricky agrees to buy her a Marcel. When he discovers that she's been cheating, with Ethel's connivance, the husbands plot their revenge. They commission a local tailor to run up two shapeless frocks, made from burlap potato sacks, which they pass off as Marcel's top-secret looks for the next season, completing the ensembles with two chapeaux: a wine bucket and a feed bag. The foursome then repair to a café—America's first public fashion victims dressed in their barnyard finery—where Marcel, an oily-looking character in a beret, happens to be sitting at the next table with two house mannequins. Lucy wants to thank him, at which point the miscreants confess their prank. Marcel, in the meantime, seems to have had a sudden inspiration, and rushes off. Back at the café a few hours later, the couples again find Marcel with his mannequins, who are now wearing his latest handiwork: couture potato sacks.

There was, of course, no Jacques Marcel, but the news from Paris in 1956 was of a radical new silhouette: the sack, a waistless wool shift that skimmed the body and squared its curves. Its creator was the Spanish couturier Cristóbal Balenciaga, and nothing so crude as burlap—not even an uncovered seam—ever touched his clients' skin. (The closest he came to using sackcloth was in a bolero of embroidered natural straw described by its owner, Pauline de Rothschild, as "the color of Inca gold.") Arbiters of fashion generally agree that Balenciaga, the son of a Basque fisherman and a seamstress, was the greatest couturier of the last century. Dior considered him the primus inter pares, and Chanel conceded that Balenciaga alone could construct a perfect garment from start to finish with his own hands, whereas everyone else was merely "a designer."

It is hard to imagine the aloof Spaniard warming to Lucy and Ethel, much less to a bandleader perturbed by a five-hundred-dollar dress. Among the grandees who stoically paid up were de Rothschild's husband, the baron Philippe; the banker Paul Mellon, whose wife, Bunny, ordered her gowns by the score; the Spanish sherry king Rafael de Osborne, whose effervescent queen, the former Claudia Heard, an oil heiress from Texas, rented a suite at the Paris Ritz for her couture; the Duke of Windsor; Loel Guinness, whose incomparably chic Gloria was "a little afraid," she wrote, "of not being good enough" for the clothes; Prince Rainier; Gianni Agnelli; Francisco Franco; Prince Radziwill; and "the utilities king of America," Harrison Williams, whose bride Mona (later Countess Bismarck) won the title of "best-dressed woman in the world" the first time it was awarded, in 1933, and even had her gardening shorts tailored by the Master. The only big-time balker I can think of was John F. Kennedy, who was outraged by the First Lady's couture bills (his father settled most of them). But the regal opera cape of ivory silk ziberline that Jackie wore, with a Franco-Kabuki hairdo, to dine in Paris with de Gaulle was a tribute to Balenciaga by his intimate and protégé, Hubert de Givenchy.

The exorbitant labor and materials invested in a couture dress (one of Claudia de Osborne's favorites had a bustle of ermine tails) have always been reflected in its price, but Balenciaga was the most expensive house in Paris, and its directrice, Mlle. Renée, once put off a faithful client who had asked if she might bring a friend to the lugubrious salon on the Avenue George V by noting coldly that "curious" strangers were unwelcome. Curious strangers, however, will have ample opportunity, this year and next, to see what happened in the inner sanctum. The first of four ambitious Balenciaga exhibitions, curated by Givenchy, opened last March in Paris, at the Mona Bismarck Foundation. The second and grandest of the shows, also in Paris, a retrospective curated by Pamela Golbin, of the Musée de la Mode et du Textile, with Nicolas Ghesquière, the current designer of Balenciaga ready-to-wear, opens on July 6th. The third, curated by Myra Walker, the director of the Texas Fashion Collection, at the University of North Texas, in Denton, will occupy a suite of galleries normally dedicated to visiting collections of Spanish art at the Meadows Museum, in Dallas, next February. And the fourth, scheduled for September of 2007, will celebrate the completion of a new, multimillion-dollar museum and headquarters for the Balenciaga Foundation, in the couturier's birthplace, Guetaria—a fishing village on the Bay of Biscay between San Sebastián and Bilbao.

Balenciaga's work was treasured by its owners and, on the whole, lovingly preserved. He designed some three hundred originals a year, from which a staff that numbered, at its height, five hundred tailors, seamstresses, fitters, pattern cutters, milliners, and specialists in embellishment filled thousands of private orders. At any stage, Balenciaga might decide to tear apart the muslin pattern, or the finished garment, even when it was wrapped for delivery. Many clients recalled his obsession with sleeves, and he was capable of spending a sleepless twenty-four hours to redo one. Chitchat or smoking in the studio was forbidden (although the silence was periodically fractured by the Master's rages at an imperfectly set shoulder). Sumptuous fabric was a house signature, and the great couture textile firms often collaborated with Balenciaga on innovative silks or woollens with a firm body that lent itself to sculptural treatment. He told Givenchy, "The cloth is like a living skin: it must never be ravaged or insulted."

Balenciaga commuted frequently between France and Spain, where his sister and relatives supervised his two busy satellite houses (their label, Eisa, was an abbreviation of his mother's patronymic, Eizaguirre). Courrèges and Ungaro both served a provincial apprenticeship at Eisa before returning to the Avenue George V, and they perfected their craft by helping to translate the Paris models for a slightly staider and more frugal clientele. (According to Balenciaga's

PREVIOUS SPREAD: LEFT, PHILIPPE POTTIER; RIGHT, LIPNITZKI/ROGER-VIOLLET/IMAGE WORKS

Previous page: Balenciaga (right) in 1927, and a guipure sheath with a ribbed-silk bow, from his spring, 1951, collection.

grandnephew Agustín, Doña Carmen, General Franco's wife, had the "annoying" habit of showing up with her own discount fabric.) There is enough extant couture to give each curator the luxury of drawing upon different archives. Pamela Golbin told me that she and Ghesquière will leave the Spanish work and its history to the foundation, and Myra Walker said that she will focus on the bequests of Osborne and of Bert de Winter, a glamorous divorcée who became the star millinery buyer at Neiman Marcus, and whose discreet romance with a married mogul financed her own couture shopping.

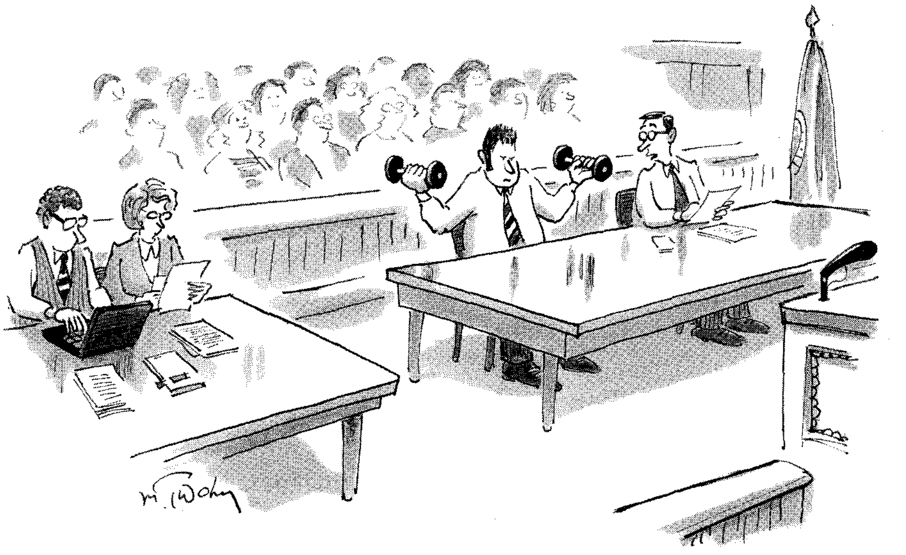
Balenciaga opened his Paris couture house in August, 1937, at the age of forty-two, and closed it in 1968, in the midst of the May uprisings. The fall of the Spanish monarchy, in 1931, and the ensuing Civil War were unpropitious for anyone in a carriage trade, so Balenciaga, whose business in Spain had collapsed, followed his clients abroad. Having failed to find work in England (he revered British tailoring), Balenciaga formed a partnership with two fellow-émigrés: a Basque financier, Nicolás Bizcarrondo; and a debonair Frenchman of Russian extraction, Vladzio Zawrorowski d'Attainville, who was, Walker told me, "Cristóbal's great love." They put up a hundred thousand francs, which financed—barely—a début that was greeted with ecstasy by the French press. "Let us dream a little," a radio journalist told his listeners, the next year, "before an enchanting collection as heady as a Spanish wine . . . that is all instinct and sensuality." He went on to describe "a procession of ravishing and inspired" dresses for a fairy queen, an infanta, or a Pompadour, "which pass from violent colors to exquisitely sweet pastels," while "a liturgical black and white are treated with genius in evening gowns for the cruel consorts of a doge." This delirious effusion set the tone for many, if not most, future reviews, and it was amplified by lucrative praise from England and America for the "dramatic simplicity" of Balenciaga's daywear, which, *Harper's Bazaar* noted, "abides by the great rule that elimination is the secret of chic."

Balenciaga himself abided by the rule that the refusal of compromise is the secret of couture. When other couturiers capitulated, in the fifties, to the inevitable democratization of their business and began to produce prêt-à-porter, he stubbornly rejected the terms—and windfalls—of surrender. Whatever his politics, he had the prudence, while doing business during the Occupation, never to discuss them (although, according to his most reliable biographer, Lesley Miller, an English art historian, he did scoff at Hitler's suggestion that the haute couture should be relocated to Berlin, saying, "He might as well take all the bulls there and try to train matadors"). His career was that of a royalist, and the sometimes puzzling extremes of his style—austerity and pomp, extravagance and reserve, humility and intolerance—prove to be the paradoxes of his devout Spanish Catholicism.

Piety and chic may not obviously be compatible, but penitents and perfectionists tend to have a lot in common. Balenciaga's confessor described him as a "haunted" soul, and he was a man obsessed with his own flaws, as well as with those of women, who aspired to transcend them by creating an infallibly beautiful body of work. That struggle left him eternally dissatisfied, according to his friend Bettina Ballard—"at times, hungry and empty, at other times, filled with a great sense of injustice." When Dior reaped the glory for reviving the French luxury business with his *corolle* silhouette of 1947 (later repackaged, more commercially, as the New Look), Balenciaga—who, before and throughout the war, had shown similarly shapely suits and dresses with an hourglass waist and a voluminous skirt—felt the slight keenly. "You have to understand that M. Balenciaga's couture was not only a style of dress but a code of conduct," Givenchy explained to me last March, at the opening of his show. "He took the old-fashioned view that a woman should confide herself to a single couturier. When the New Look began turning heads, and some clients deserted him, he was profoundly grieved by their fickleness, and that of the press. Afterward, he became a more introverted figure, refusing to make public appearances or to supervise the fittings of all but a chosen few." Devastated by the sudden death of d'Attainville, the following year, Balenciaga was dissuaded from retiring only by an appeal from Dior himself.

Balenciaga was never willing to do the kind of self-promotion that Dior did, which he considered demeaning. Nor would he pander to headline writers with seasonal novelties and catchy names to describe them. But Balenciaga's mandarin reticence asserted his supremacy, and the double shocks of 1947 and 1948 ultimately galvanized his talent and revealed him as a formidable competitor with an insolent streak of pride. When he defied the Chambre Syndicale de la Couture to show his collections—with Givenchy—a month later than his peers, buyers and journalists obediently trudged back to Paris. The renegades got exclusive coverage in every style column or magazine.

The sack made headlines in 1956 in



"Don't be so defeatist!"

"But stay off the couch."

• •

part because to the average man it seemed so militantly unsexy. (Fellini, however, was intrigued. According to his biographer Hollis Alpert, he spoke of the sack as a "fantastic and extraordinary" new style that "set light to my imagination.") But Balenciaga's counter-revolution had begun the previous year, when he showed his first streamlined tunic dress—a monkish tabard with three-quarter sleeves worn over a straight underskirt. Throughout the fifties, his designs became purer of line, airier of volume, and more geometric. The historian and curator Richard Martin described the chemise and the trapezoidal "baby doll" dress as "cages" for the body—though they freed it from elaborate corseting and offered an imperfect figure a kind of protective custody. His gourd-shaped wraps of the same period were cocoons in which a woman could imagine herself—or in which a man could dream of finding—a butterfly. The tunic, however, as Myra Walker writes in the forthcoming catalogue of the Dallas show, "Balenciaga and his Legacy" (Yale; $65), "was a genie that could not be put back into the bottle." In abolishing the waist and stripping his daywear of its surface detail, Balenciaga gave his apprentice Courrèges (who left the house in 1961) a template for the Space Age look of 1965, which gave the mods a template for the miniskirt. The least subversive of couturiers thus became, despite himself, a sire of the youthquake. "People used to keep telling me that fashion came from the streets," Diana Vreeland told Eugenia Sheppard in 1973, "but I had always seen it at Balenciaga first."

The modernity of late Balenciaga isn't of the street, however, even if he was one of the first to show high boots with harlequin tights under a shorter skirt, and cheeky sportswear in transparent plastic and faux fur. Of the two clear—and conflicting—sets of instruction that he left to posterity, one is addressed to a dying imperium, and the other to an improbable utopia. The former legacy, perhaps, reflects the nostalgia for grandeur of a fisherman's son steeped in his national folklore and art history, who costumed his clients in the draperies of a Zurbarán Madonna, matador boleros encrusted with jet embroidery, and fantastical bubbles of beribboned lace that seem to have come from a Murano glassblower. The latter legacy contains the runic musings of an ascetic who progressively whittles away at the inessential. He adapted the vestments of his parish church—the cope, the chasuble, and the casula—for the wardrobe of a worldly woman, and he experimented with feats of minimal tailoring, like the one-seam coat and the no-seam dress—an asymmetric jersey wrap shaped by two darts and fastened at the shoulder like a toga. By the end of his career, Balenciaga seemed less interested in clothing a body than in treating it as an armature for thrilling and sometimes weird abstractions that the camera loved. (The history of modern fashion as we think we know it is actually the history of fashion photography.) In this work, Balenciaga married couture to modernism.

Any piece of couture by Balenciaga is a collector's item, but that doesn't make it a masterpiece. The early work is sometimes difficult to distinguish from that of his contemporaries. The famous opulence of his beading and embroidery evokes vanished Xanadus, yet it also recalls state dinners at the Reagan White House. The workhorse of Balenciaga's stable was a boxy, semi-fitted suit with a standaway collar and a cropped sleeve. He showed it most often in a fuzzy mohair or a tweed bouclé and sometimes in a mannish windowpane check. And no matter how deftly Balenciaga "adjusted" the waist, or handled the bulk of a stiff fabric, the suit looks dowdy today. There were dozens of versions in the archives in Guetaria, Denton, and Paris, and they elicited in me—as they might, I suspect, in anyone old enough to have burned her bra—a faintly morbid shudder at a world of claustrophobic gentility which an army of daughters set upon, around 1970, in a frenzy of sartorial matricide. The sexpots went elsewhere: to Saint Laurent, whose little black dresses and severe tailleurs owed almost everything to Balenciaga but which turned the attractive trick of perverting his bourgeois sense of propriety—the "Belle de Jour" effect.

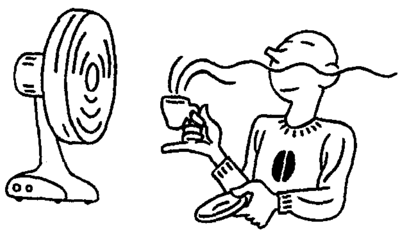
Mostly because the work of Irving Penn, Richard Avedon, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, Bert Stern, Tom Kublin, and, later, Hiro was primarily in black-and-white, it is startling to realize that Balenciaga, like the ancient Greeks—but also like the doyennes who winter in Palm Beach—had no qualms about showy, if not garish, color: cerise and lime; puce and royal blue; the purples and yellows of a pansy bed. Woman-as-flower is a recurring motif, though it is most poetic when least literal, as in his "cabbage cape" of 1967, a sensuous whorl of silk ruffles that tops a columnar sheath in which the body becomes a stalk for his sublimely abstract corolla. The other extreme is a parachute-silk evening pajama of 1966 smothered with three-dimensional floral appliqués: dainty camouflage for a she-yeti. And at the Bismarck show I marvelled at an evening coat that was somehow as unsettling as a fetish. Its bell-shaped inner shell of absinthe-green tulle was completely feathered with curly, translucent ostrich plumes, each no thicker than a false eyelash and individually sewn on at a random angle, so that its wearer's slightest movement caused the surface to tremble. Before she lit a cigarette and took a drink, the slavishly admired Countess Bismarck, who owned the coat, must have seemed like some hybrid divinity—half human, half bird.

Each of Balenciaga's legacies had its cohort of disciples, and the courtly knights of the old order are Givenchy, Ungaro (who told me last March that the Master taught him everything he knows about a "woman's mystery" and "moral rigor"), and Oscar de la Renta, who learned the romance of the ruffle by heart, in his youth, and is still reciting it. "I don't like to speak of fashion now," Givenchy admitted with good nature, "so I have my blinders on." We were sitting alone in Mona Bismarck's conservatory (the Bismarck Foundation is housed in her former mansion, on the Seine), and Givenchy, who is seventy-nine, pulled his gilt chair closer to mine. "I was seventeen when I came, timid and quaking with respect, to the Avenue George V with my portfolio. Mlle. Renée sent me away—M. Balenciaga wouldn't see me, she said. But we met at a cocktail party in New York about seven years later. My passion for the vocation moved him, and I think he saw in me someone he could share his own with. 'No cheating': that was his cardinal rule."

The guests for the opening reception began arriving, and Givenchy left me politely to stand on the receiving line and kiss their hands. Many were petite, exquisitely groomed old ladies in couture suits who had their granddaughters in tow—the kind of *jeunes filles comme il faut* that one rarely sees on the streets of Paris anymore, and you had to wonder in what convent they had all been stowed. The girls were most interested, as I was, in a gallery of bridal gowns—the only pieces on display that had not belonged to Mona Bismarck, despite her five trips to the altar—and a small gaggle of them, sisters and cousins, perhaps, with the same corn-silk hair, stood for a long while before a display mannequin in a corner that was facing the wall. The arms were bare, and the head and shoulders were opaquely veiled in a cowl of ivory gazar. The back of the gown, which was all one could see, fell in an unbroken, parabolic sweep of full-bodied silk that tapered into a train. It had one seam, like the axis of an elm leaf. But despite its weight and stiffness—and its nunlike solemnity—the dress was a Brancusi. This is the prophetic Balenciaga, the one who taught the schismatics of fashion—like Courrèges, Paco Rabanne, Geoffrey Beene, and, after them, an avant-garde of Japanese and Belgians—how to cut free.

Balenciaga was born in Guetaria in 1895. A century ago, the harsh monotony of village life would have been relieved by the beauty of a spectacular landscape and the tumult of the sea. Today, an ugly baffle of condominiums is going up above the beachfront, and a cluster of low-cost, modern housing strung with banners supporting the Basque separatist movement occupies the high ground south of the corniche. But the old town still consists of four narrow, medieval streets, a slanted Gothic church of worn ochre stone, a marina, a small square with a large statue of the explorer Juan Sebastián Elcano, and a cemetery on the windswept hill, where Balenciaga is buried, along with his parents and siblings.

Balenciaga's father supplemented his modest living as a fisherman by acting as the village mayor. He died young, and his widow took in sewing to help support their three children. Cristóbal, the youngest, may have graduated from the local grammar school, but, according to Aberri Olaskoaga Berazadi, of the Balenciaga Foundation, he received no further formal education. He was destined for a sailor's life, or perhaps the seminary—his uncle was a priest. Though little is known about his formative years, Cristóbal seems to have helped his mother with the relatively menial needlework that she did for the women of a noble family, the Marqueses de Casa Torres, who summered above the village in the Aldamar palace, a fussy, nineteenth-century mansion—vaguely Alpine, vaguely rococo—with wooden balconies and a façade of raspberry-pink stucco. It currently houses the offices and archives of the foundation, and behind it is a vast excavation site where a new museum wing—a long horizontal tube of articulated-glass sections—will be erected.



The legend of Balenciaga's rise seems more cinematic than likely when one has walked Guetaria's unevenly cobbled streets, whose ancient tenements are swagged with drying laundry, and which smell of fish grilling on outdoor braziers even today. Cristóbal was thirteen when he followed his mother's patron, Doña Blanca, as, presumably, she made her way to Mass, for where else could she have been going on a summer day, alone in the village, in a couture suit? He begged her to let him copy it, and she is said to have agreed. Whatever the truth, Marie-Andrée Jouve, Balenciaga's former house archivist, notes simply in the chronology of "Balenciaga" (Assouline; $18.95), a brief, illustrated memoir recently reissued, that the Marquesa "encouraged" his career. Some fifty years later, he made the gift of a wedding dress—a majestically prim confection of satin and mink—to her granddaughter Fabiola de Mora y Aragón, when she married the King of Belgium.

Balenciaga spent his teens as an apprentice to society tailors in Madrid and San Sebastián—the summer residence of the Spanish court—and he became the consummate court dressmaker. It was a point of honor, for such a man, to flatter the conventions of an exalted clientele. His business was built on the premise that a lady changed her clothes three times a day, disdained the familiarity of inferiors, flaunted her diamonds but never her indiscretions, and travelled with several steamer trunks and a maid. (The jet plane, Givenchy pointed out, dealt one of the death blows to couture.) That lady, like Balenciaga himself, was apt to be hostile to the mood of disaffection that became glamorous when a new generation embraced the louche, the epicene, and the plebeian. Even though the theatre of the barricades of May, 1968, attracted its share of chic walk-ons in Saint Laurent, it is hard to imagine any of Balenciaga's house stalwarts as a rock or flower thrower. And, whether or not the festive insurrection that helped topple de Gaulle influenced Balenciaga's decision to retire, it would end his era. "I have given enough," he later told Givenchy. "There is no one left for me to dress."

San Sebastián was a sophisticated spa and casino town, built on the lines of Biarritz. The local Basques were prosperous, and the summer population, from both sides of the border, rich. The city was famous for its seaside promenade, its luxury shopping, and, in particular, the men's haberdasheries that made it a center of what Lesley Miller calls "Spanish Brummellism." According to Jouve, young Cristóbal, in 1913, is "employed at the shop 'Louvre,' and rapidly rises to the top." In 1919, at the age of twenty-four, he opened his first fashion house, and then two more, and began travelling to Paris for the couture shows. He had somehow borrowed or earned enough capital to buy originals at Chanel, Vionnet, and Schiaparelli, and he assiduously studied their construction. The female couturiers were his greatest mentors, but by then he probably knew that he loved men. He was the kind of romantic-looking youth, dark and slim, with a repressed, Proustian intensity, who would have been attractive to the Brummells. Golbin believes that he met d'Attainville in the twenties, and it seems plausible that this artistic polyglot, who later designed the witty house millinery, became Balenciaga's Pygmalion, refining his persona and finishing its seams. Their relationship was never clandestine, and they lived together on the Rue de Boétie. But once Franco had come to power, and his wife and daughter began dressing at Balenciaga, the two men would have had to be circumspect.

Flamboyance, in any case, was alien to the nature of a laconic and touchy man who was a cipher to outsiders, and who preferred to say nothing about himself rather than to strike a false pose. After 1948, he shunned the press, which he despised (he banished from his shows journalists deficient in reverence); refused to give interviews until he retired, and then gave only one; and worked in silence, in an all-white room. "Don't waste yourself in society," he told the textile magnate Gustav Zumsteg, and between collections he retreated from Paris to one of his houses in France or Spain, where he is said to have enjoyed knitting, collecting fashion plates and bric-a-brac, and shopping for antiques, which piled up in storage. Another guilty pleasure, according to Ungaro, was a penchant for fresh eels with garlic.

Balenciaga's inner circle included Givenchy; Aimé and Marguerite Maeght, who built one of Europe's great contemporary-art collections; Bettina Ballard; and Carmel Snow, the editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, with whom Balenciaga later had a falling out. But, for the most part, his close friends were Basque. Sonsoles Díez de Rivera first met Balenciaga as a schoolgirl in the nineteen-forties (he designed her First Communion dress). She is a lively patrician, still striking in late middle age, and her manners belie one of Balenciaga's rare, flippant remarks: that you can tell a distinguished woman by her disagreeable air. We met at the Bismarck show, and Díez de Rivera spoke in passing about her mother, the Marquesa de Llanzol, a beauty whose swanlike aplomb recalls that of Babe Paley and who is often described as Balenciaga's Spanish muse. He dressed her and her daughters for twenty-five years, and, in the catalogue for a show of the family couture, Díez de Rivera recalled Balenciaga as a "bighearted, affectionate" friend with "a joy for life" and a "sense of humor." To support this surprising claim, she described her mother's first encounter with Balenciaga, around 1942, at the Eisa atelier in Madrid. The Marquesa was pregnant, and, as the dress she was having made would no longer fit her after she gave birth, she asked for a discount. The house refused, so she confronted the Master in a corridor of the salon. Díez de Rivera said, "Balenciaga looked at her over his glasses, and asked, 'Why should I have to give you a discount on a dress just because you are expecting? I'm not the one to blame.' "

Balenciaga made few concessions, either to private clients or to the better department stores that paid a premium for his originals with the strictly controlled right to make copies at different price points. But he was generous to other couturiers, dressing the great Vionnet after her retirement, supporting the work of Givenchy, and lending Courrèges the money to open his own house, then refusing repayment when Courrèges was successful. The two offenses that Balenciaga never pardoned were careless workmanship—a form of disrespect to the cloth—and personal disloyalty. Chanel lost his friendship and esteem forever with a spiteful remark to a reporter about his decrepitude. He wept with chagrin when he heard it, Givenchy told me, and sent back all her gifts. "But M. Balenciaga," he continued, "made a point of going to Coco's funeral, saying to me"—apparently without irony—"one must know how to forget."

There is, perhaps, nothing the fashion world does better than forget. Balenciaga died in 1972, and his name is best known to the youth of today as the label in a sought-after handbag with punkish hardware—studs, buckles, and a zipper festooned with leather streamers. There have been a series of slight variations on the basic design, and a medium-sized version of the ever-popular motorcycle bag, in pink or silver, retails for around twelve hundred dollars, about half the price of a suit by the Master in the nineteen-fifties. The prototype was designed by Nicolas Ghesquière in 2000. "My generation doesn't have any sense of the collective patrimony that Balenciaga represents," he told me in New York, last March, "and initially, I suppose, neither did I."

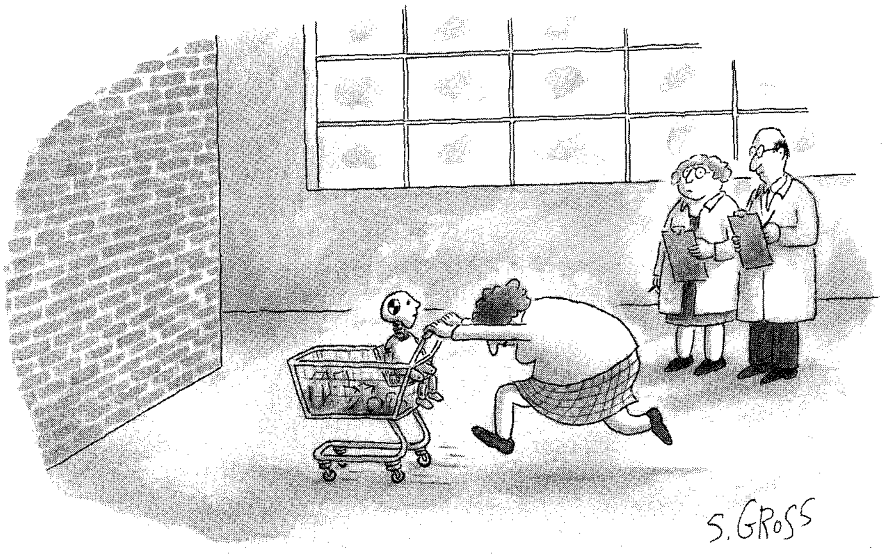
Ghesquière is a slightly built man of thirty-five—wary but not withholding—with Arctic-blue eyes that are set off by a stubble of dark beard. He has something of the young Balenciaga's sultry air of hypersensitivity, and he, too, speaks about himself without affectation. He was born near Lille, an industrial city in the north of France, and grew up in the Loire valley, not far from Chanel's birthplace, in Saumur. His father taught physical education and hoped that his son would do the same. At eighteen, however, Ghesquière left home for Paris, aspiring to a career in fashion, and he was hired as an assistant at Jean Paul Gaultier. After two years, he quit to support himself designing knitwear. In 1995, he was offered a job by the owners of Balenciaga, Groupe Jacques Bogart, which had bought the company from a German firm that bought it from Balenciaga's heirs. Though Balenciaga officially disdained ready-to-wear, Golbin believes that he was "fascinated" by its possibilities and constraints. In 1968, he told the Marquesa de Llanzol that he regretted not being younger, for he might have produced “amusing but tasteful” readymades for “the era we live in.” He had licensed his name for a line of hosiery; the house had marketed several profitable scents for men and women; and in 1968 he accepted a commission from Air France to design the uniforms for its flight attendants. (I travelled to Paris for the first time in 1969, on an Air France charter, of which I remember nothing but the hostesses’ chic. The new uniform consisted of a short, svelte skirt in navy-blue serge, with in-seam pockets, hemmed slightly above the knee; a trim jacket in the same fabric; and a white blouse and gloves. Only the silly hat, shaped like a baba mold, marked these ensembles as corporate livery.) It was Balenciaga’s sole foray into mass production, but the practical challenge of dressing a legion of Mariannes—the public face of Gallic womanhood—was apparently irresistible.

Several forgettable creators had tried to make a viable luxury brand of Balenciaga before Ghesquière, who found himself consigned to turning out golf outfits and funeral clothes for the Japanese franchises. In 1997, the managers fired their chief designer, Josephus Thimister, and failed to lure their leading candidate to replace him, Helmut Lang; in desperation, they asked Ghesquière to produce a collection. After doing so, he was also fired, but was called back and promoted when the sales figures came in. The moody swagger of his clothes—gaunt leather blousons and stovepipe pants—suggested the costumes for a biker “Hamlet” set in a bleak metropolis like Lille, a century from now. Their success assured Ghesquière’s continued employment when Balenciaga was sold to the Gucci Group, in 2001. He says, “I got the job because I had my own vision, and because of my youth. It was intimidating enough just to be at the house. I hesitated to explore Balenciaga’s archives until a few years ago, when I realized I could just go downstairs for an hour at a time, without feeling pressured, to see what caught my eye.”

Ghesquière has, at times, clashed with Gucci executives, including Tom Ford and Domenico de Sole. He had a reputation for being difficult, and he, in turn, felt hobbled by a lack of confidence and financial support. Nor, as Cathy Horyn wrote in the *Times* last year, did it help his status “as fashion’s new messiah when he was caught copying, line for line, a patchwork vest by the late Kaisik Wong, a California designer of the 70s.” In 2003, Ghesquière was about to resign—though more in frustration than disgrace—when Ford and de Sole left Gucci abruptly after failed contract negotiations.

Whatever embarrassment he may have felt about the Wong episode, Ghesquière realized that he could begin citing Balenciaga without sacrificing his bohemian integrity. In 2004, he introduced Edition, a costly line with couture detailing based on archival designs, and last February his ready-to-wear show, a dauphin’s canny homage to a king, was the sensation of Fashion Week. Tickets were perhaps even harder to come by than invitations to Balenciaga’s excruciating, two-hour *défilés* (conducted in total silence, though smoking was allowed). Ghesquière started promptly on a rainy morning, without extraneous theatrics, and out came a procession of eerily familiar tweed suits with standaway collars and bubble skirts; boxy, molded jackets with raglan sleeves and bejewelled, gumball buttons; austerely cut sheaths in gorgeously stodgy materials like quilted silver lamé. But Ghesquière had given these elderly ghosts an elixir of youth that made them more desirable—at least to look at—than the originals. The comparison was a bit unfair, because Balenciaga created his classics for a body of average height with a bulge here and there, and his house mannequins were hired for their cool dignity rather than for their sex appeal. Ghesquière’s runway models were nubile Giacomettis, and, to exaggerate their legs, he sent them out in seven-inch platform boots. But the clothes were not just cleverly updated vintage. By shrinking, squeezing, cropping, stretching, or inflating their proportions, Ghesquière endowed them with an exotic buoyance—like that of anime—and he reminded his audience that modernity in dress reflects the sense of dislocation which defines modern life.

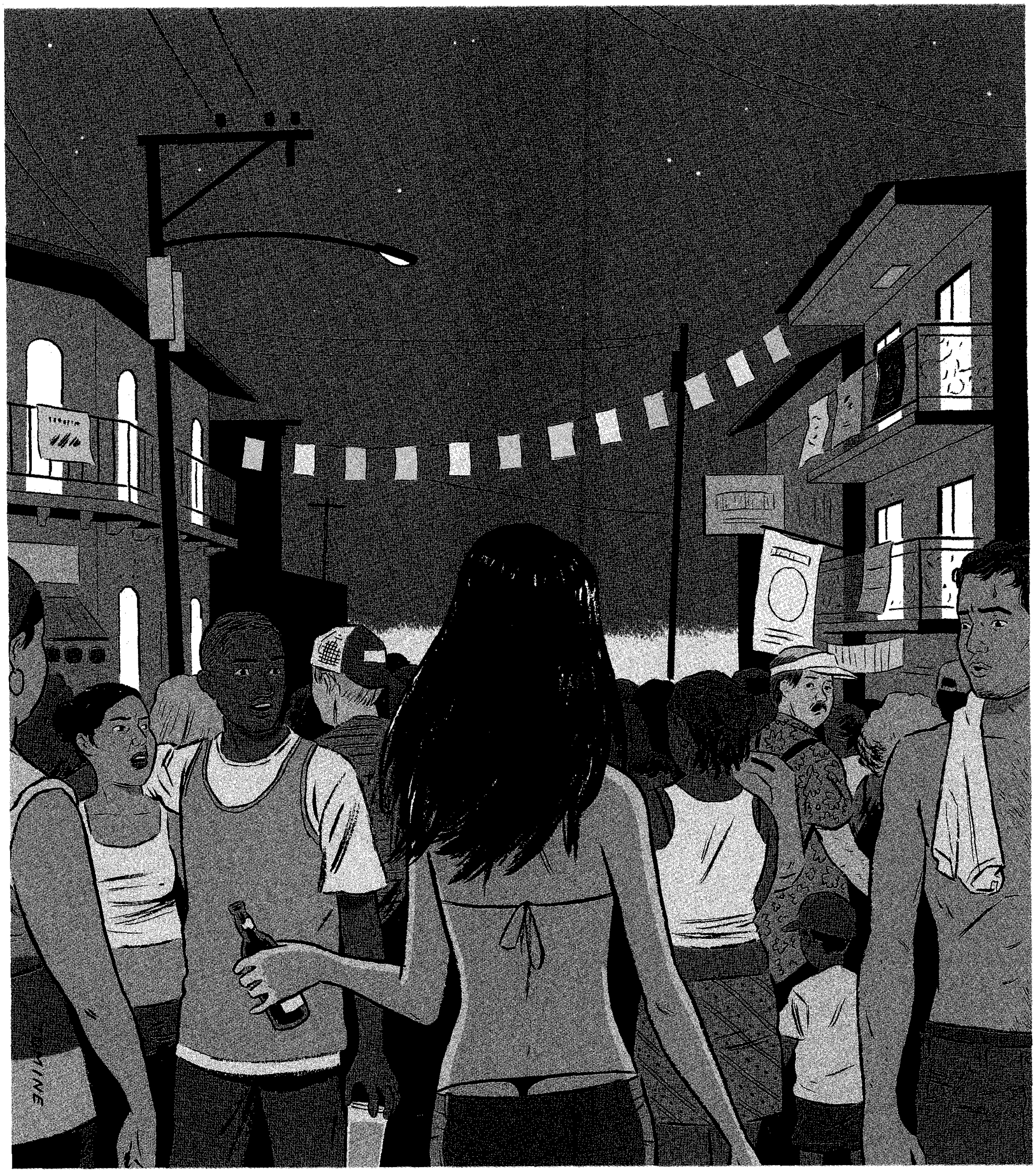
A sense of dislocation often hones the instincts of a gifted gay youth from the provinces, like Ghesquière, or like Saint Laurent, forty years ago. They are able to recognize a closeted seductress—a Buñuel heroine, like Belle de Jour—and help to realize her potential for transgression. That, perhaps, is how they both saw, and saw through to, Balenciaga’s latent eroticism. Yet the secret life embodied in Balenciaga’s couture—his own—cannot be discovered in a fashion show, a photograph, or a retrospective. You have to examine his seams from the inside out. If no ready-to-wear can approximate them, it isn’t because a machine can’t make perfect stitches. A machine doesn’t suffer from the terror of failure and exposure inherent in virtuosity. Fashion plays upon the same fear when it attempts to persuade gullible women that a dress can make them as unassailably lovely as the inhumanly perfect teen-ager who models it. But Balenciaga, who refused to cheat, took the true measure of a woman’s sins, and forgave them. ◆



FICTION

CARNIVAL, LAS TABLAS

BY CRISTINA HENRÍQUEZ



I enjoyed Carnival in the beginning. Back when I started going, I was like everyone else—that one weekend in February was all I looked forward to. But after going every year for the past eight years, since I was sixteen, and after going to Las Tablas, of all places, the bright and pulsing center of Carnival in Panama, after seeing thousands of people crammed into a few narrow streets and a town square, and being doused by water often enough that I slept in wet clothes, and being awakened by thumping tambourines, and dancing to the *comparsas* as they paraded down the streets alongside the elaborately attired queens, and baking in the sun, and feeding my flesh to the mosquitoes, and coming home four days later with my whole body sore, and realizing when someone asked if I’d had a good time at Carnival that I could hardly remember one thing that had happened the whole long weekend—after all of that, I’d had enough.

Last night, though, I changed my mind. I was scrubbing makeup off one of my work blouses in the laundry tub when I overheard my mother, on the phone, bragging to a friend that my father had thrown a big party for her birthday a week ago, that he had rented out the whole casino at the Caesar Park and hired dancers with feathers on their heads to bring her a cake—when I heard her *lie* for him—and I decided maybe I wasn’t so over Carnival after all.

At work today, I ask the girl at the desk next to mine whether there’s room on the bus she’s taking to Carnival. She tells me that the guy who rented the bus sold all the seats in the first week. But she knows another guy, who is leaving for Chitré after work on Friday and who might have room in his car. He has a Land Rover, she explains, and gives me his number. I call him, but his car is full, too. I go through a whole list of phone numbers, with no success. I spend my days answering phones in a bank lobby, so no one suspects that I’m doing anything but work. Finally, at home in the evening, I ask my sister Yesenia if I can ride with her.

ADRIAN TOMINE

“I promised a girl at school she could borrow my car. So Chato’s driving,” she says.

“O.K.”

She raises her eyebrows at me.

“What? Do I need to get permission from Chato?”

I am on my bed in a camisole and pajama shorts, the nubby bedspread rough under my thighs. Yesenia is standing in front of the dresser in our bedroom where we both have our makeup and lotions and hair bands laid out.

“Have you seen my green eyeshadow, Katia?” she asks.

“Can I go with you or not?”

“It was right here the other day. Did I already pack it?”

“Yesenia.”

This is her first year going to Carnival. Most people start when they’re teen-agers—sixteen, eighteen. I invited her to go with me plenty of times. But Yesenia didn’t want to unless she could go with a boyfriend. She maintains a pretty constant stream of guys, ones who just drift in and out, but she’s never had a true boyfriend during Carnival until now. Who knows why, but about two months ago she decided that Chato was the one she was going to hang on to.

It’s no secret that Chato’s not my favorite. He has a decent enough job doing network stuff for Cable & Wireless. But almost every time I see him he is trying to talk my mother into buying a cell phone. Or he’s lying on our couch, watching *fútbol.* He keeps his fingernails long, because he plays the guitar. And he drinks too much, which once resulted in his tearing a gash down Yesenia’s arm when, she says, he stumbled and caught his nail on her skin. But the moment that turned me off Chato forever was when he walked into Yesenia’s and my bedroom one day and plopped himself on her bed. “I’m reading,” I told him, tapping my finger against my open book. He nodded, then leaned down and sniffed Yesenia’s pillow. He stretched out on her bed, his hands clasped behind his head. I asked him what he was doing. He scooted down to the middle of her mattress, lifted the bedspread, and smelled her sheets, right where her *coño* would have lain all night.

As far as Carnival goes, Chato believes there is hardly any point to it if he is expected to stay loyal to one girl. He kept telling Yesenia that, and each time she just laughed: “Oh, Chato, you’re such a clown.” But somehow last week she got him to agree to it.

“Fine. Yes. You can ride with us. But you can’t complain from the back seat the whole drive there.”

“You’re going to Las Tablas?”

“Of course. And I intend to have a good time. So don’t ruin it for me.”

Yesenia and I have four years between us. Which is an odd way to say it, I guess, because almost from the second she was born there was nothing—not years, not other people, not a wisp of air to breathe—that came between us.

In the beginning, I hovered over her while she slept in the crib that used to be mine, her baby hair sticking up like wings off her head; I brought my mother talcum powder to sprinkle in her diaper; I sat cross-legged on the couch and watched cartoons while I held her, heavy as a sack, in my little arms.

As soon as Yesenia outgrew her crib, we shared a room—two twin beds against opposite walls, a small glass-topped nightstand in between. We’d fall asleep talking to each other, and in the mornings she’d jump on my bed until, with my entire body bouncing, I opened my eyes to the sight of her smiling, her feet landing rhythmically on either side of me again and again.

Every day after school, Yesenia and I would sit at the kitchen table and do our homework, Yesenia always needling me to let her look at my old tests and notes from the classes I’d already been through, me poking her with my foot under the table. Every party we went to ended up with the two of us, huddled somewhere in a corner, gossiping and laughing to ourselves. Every decision we made required a consultation. Every everything in our lives, it seemed, had to do with each other.

Four months ago, all that changed. My father lost his job and started spending his days at the horse track, losing my mother’s money, and coming home only occasionally. In the past month, I have seen him twice. Yesenia is furious with me because I am making such a big deal about it. When he does come home, I fight with him, challenging him to tell me where he's been. I yell at my mother, too, for taking his shit. Yesenia said once, "We all know you're the tough one, Katia. What was it Mami said? Skin like armor. You don't have to prove it every chance you get." But I am just as angry at Yesenia for acting as if there were nothing more going on than a cloud passing overhead, momentarily blotting out the sun.

What Yesenia doesn't know is that for months I have been sleeping in fits and starts, straining all night for the sound of my father arriving home. I wait for the creak of the wooden door as it opens and the clang of the exterior metal door as it settles shut. I wait for the sound of my father's footsteps, his worn soles trudging across the linoleum floor. I wait for the wall that my parents' bedroom shares with ours to vibrate a little as he closes the door to their room. I wait, tense in the fuzzy heat, while Yesenia sleeps, for all of this to happen, even though it hardly ever does.

Recently, my mother told me that when she and my father were first married he was embarrassed to let her fold his laundered underwear. She was sitting on the edge of her bed, rubbing cream on her hands. "It didn't make any sense," she said thoughtfully. "I already touched his underwear when I washed them and again when I hung them on the line. But folding! And of course I touched them when they had nothing to do with the laundry." She shook her head. "There are a lot of things about him that don't make sense lately, no?"

She looked so tired, her face scrubbed clean, her shapeless nightgown hanging on her like a tent. I started to get into bed next to her, to fill my father's side.

My mother said, "What are you doing?"

"I was going to sleep with you."

"No, no, no," she said, shooing me out. "What if he comes home? I want to leave a space. Besides," she said, squirming under the sheet, "Yesenia would miss you, wouldn't she?"

Yesenia agreed that she and Chato would pick me up at work. I told her I didn't want to be at home any more than I had to be. She huffed at that and said, "I really don't know what your problem is, Katia."

I am sitting in the air-conditioning, my shoes kicked off under my desk, rubbing my nyloned feet together, when I hear a horn honking. Most everyone is gone already. At the sound of the honk, I slide my feet back into my black pumps, grab my bag, and walk out.

I see Chato through the driver's-side window of his little Toyota Tercel. His long hair is tucked behind his ears, and he's angling the rearview mirror so that he can watch while he picks at something in his teeth. Two thin mattresses are roped to the top of the car. I open the door and get in behind him. My sister turns back.

"Are you ready?" she asks. Her cheeks are flushed, and I wonder if they were just kissing.

"I guess so."

Chato rights the mirror. "Where's your mattress?" he asks.

"At my house," I say, placing my bag on the seat beside me.

He sighs. "Why did you ask us to pick you up here if we have to go to your house anyway?"

This is the plight of people who don't rent a house or reserve a room: they bring camping mattresses or else take the seat cushions from their buses so that when night rolls around they have a place to sleep. Drop the mattress on the ground and good luck. "I'll be fine," I tell him.

I watch Chato steal a glimpse at Yesenia, as if to say, Your sister better not turn into a burden for us. Yesenia shrugs.

"Look," I say, "we have two mattresses. You and Yesenia can share one, right? Maybe I can use the other."

"The hell if I'm sharing my mattress," Chato says.

Yesenia just looks out the window.

"Fine. I'll figure it out."

I first went to Carnival with Rogelio Penedes, a guy I dated in high school. He thought the two of us would make it until forever, but I had no illusions. I liked him enough to pass the time with, but I knew he was just one guy—my present but not my future. He stole his papi's car so that he could drive us to Las Tablas. We stopped at the *super* on the way out of the city to buy junk food and alcohol and ice, which we dropped by the bagful into a gigantic cooler that took up almost the entire trunk. The whole drive there, he was munching on Pringles and pork rinds and telling me how I was his one and only, how this was going to be the sort of weekend we would tell our kids about. The world outside the car window looked the way it would look every year afterward on the way to Carnival: dense greenery growing thicker and thicker as we drove farther from the city, every once in a while a house with a tin roof visible among the trees, cars speeding by on tires so small they looked like temporary spares, pebbled curbs, dogs strolling in the thick sunlight, an outdoor roadside restaurant with its name—Pollos Papi—painted in block letters on the concrete overhang.

By the time we were passing the same scenery on the way home, Rogelio and I had split up. He got tragically drunk, the way you were supposed to at Carnival, but he hooked up with this other girl, and even though I had only liked him O.K. to begin with, he was still my boyfriend and he had still cheated. My face had never been much to speak of, but my body—well, at sixteen I looked good. So I spent the weekend running under the spray of the giant hoses, keeping myself soaked, my shirt clinging to me, my bra translucent underneath, my shorts plastered around my thighs, and I paraded in front of Rogelio to remind him of what he had lost. I rode home wet, too, and kept flicking my hair over my shoulders, letting the drops spray onto him. He blasted the air-conditioning to freeze me. By the time he returned the car to his papi, he was in trouble not only for taking it but for turning the upholstery into a sopping mess. He told me once in the hallway at school, in a moment of remorse, that there was still a water-stain outline of me on the car seat. "The way there's still an imprint of you in my heart," he said.

"It will fade," I said.

Six hours of traffic and almost no conversation later, Chato announces that we're there. At the start of the trip, Yesenia pleaded with Chato to talk to her. "*Amorcito*," she said, "do you want to tell me about work?" And, "I'm getting bored." And, "Chato, come on. It's going to be a long drive."

Each time, Chato would say something like "Why don't you put on some lipstick?" and turn the radio up a little more. Eventually, the radio got loud enough that Yesenia had trouble talking over it. She looked back at me once and I waved brightly, but she made a disgusted face and turned away.

As soon as Chato switches off the engine, I drag my bag across the seat and get out. We are parked on a side street, but I can hear the swell of voices.

"Holy shit," Chato says. "I forgot you were wearing that."

I still have on my work clothes—black pumps, black skirt, nylons, tan V-neck sweater with a white button-down blouse underneath. My hair is pulled into a tight ponytail, the sides gelled to fend off frizz. I almost never wear it down.

"I'm going to change," I say, though what I brought is not much better than what I have on.

Yesenia is in an aqua-blue bathing suit, stretch denim shorts, a brown halter top, and huge wedge sandals that make her almost as tall as Chato and definitely taller than me. Yesterday, after work, she spent two hours at the beauty salon, getting waxed. Over dinner last night, our mother asked her about the bikini wax—how much it cost and how much it hurt—because, she said, she was thinking of getting one herself. "Why?" I asked, even though I knew why. "It's the little things, Katia. You never know." "A bikini wax is not going to make Papi a good guy again," I said, sawing at my meat. Yesenia kicked me hard in the shin under the table and started in on all the particulars about waxing while my mother listened with rapt attention.

I start to walk away.

"Where are you going?" Yesenia calls.

"I'm going to find a bathroom."

"When will we see you again?"

"You're driving me home, right?"

"Yeah, the car will be here all weekend," Chato says. He pulls a rubber band from around his wrist and gathers his hair in it. Then he walks to the trunk and pulls out his guitar case.

"I'll meet you here on Tuesday, then. What time?"

"Five o'clock should be good," Chato says.

I spend Friday night and all day Saturday in a field about a mile from town, as far from Carnival as I can manage. I sleep on the ground, in the open air, using my bag as a pillow. A farmhouse is visible in the distance, but, aside from a few grazing cows during the day and a handful of Carnival-goers at night, I'm by myself.

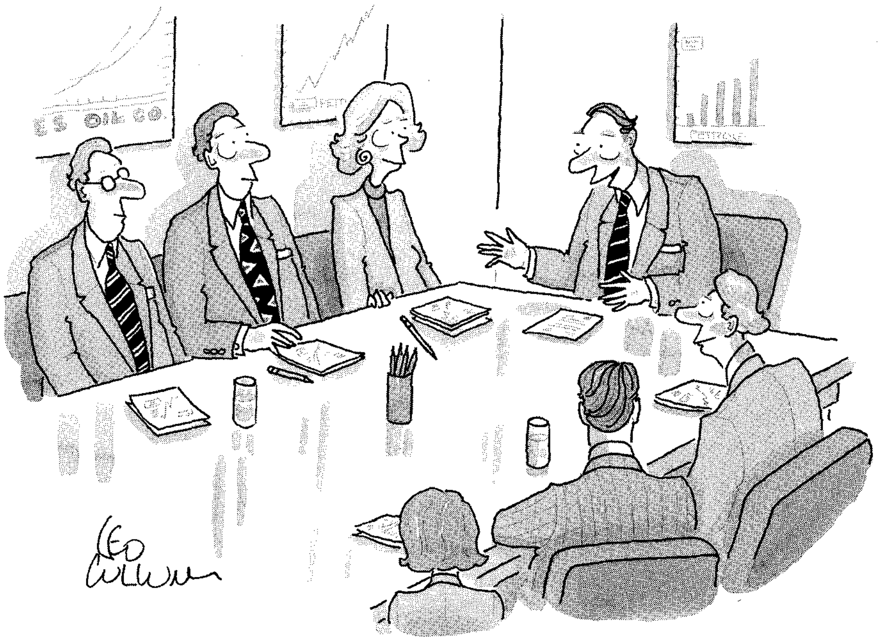
I keep thinking this: The last four months isn't the whole truth. When I was a kid, my father would sit on the floor and build block towers with me, and nap in the hammock out back with me curled against him like a caterpillar, and take me on walks around the neighborhood. He was never quite that way with Yesenia. Because I was the firstborn—the first one to steal his heart, he once said. When Yesenia came home from the hospital, I wanted to feel her soft belly instead of pressing up against my father's, and I was more interested in having her grip my finger than I was in holding my father's hand. Little by little, he grew more distant. He sat sullenly in front of the TV, or napped on his bed with the curtains drawn, or smoked with his body wedged in the half-open door that led to the laundry line out back. By the time we were guests at my cousins' *quinceañeras*, my father had turned into the person who headed for the bar as soon as he got there. He would dance a song or two with me, or once in a while with Yesenia, but mostly he would settle into a chair on the fringe of the festivities and keep to himself.

A year ago, he stopped parking his car at our house. Maybe it was mathematics. There were four people in our house. There were three cars. There were two spaces. Maybe it's just that there wasn't enough room. For as long as I could remember, my father had parked his car with the two left tires on the strip of grass between our house and the sidewalk and the two right tires on the street, just beside the curb. His car was a piece of junk, but he parked it there, straddling the sidewalk, because our street is narrow and he didn't want it to get hit. One day, I came home and his car was nowhere to be seen. My mother told me that he was paying our neighbor, Señora Urrutia, to let him park it in her driveway, since she lived alone, and had plenty of space. As soon as my mother said that, my stomach dropped. He hadn't left us yet, but he would. I guess I knew that.

In the field now, I turn when I hear the overgrown grass around me rasping. Over my shoulder I see a lanky young guy walking in my direction.

"Do you have a cigarette?" he asks.

"Sorry."



"The proposal is we give Big Pharma free gas and they give us free meds."

He pulls a pack from his pocket and offers it to me, the cellophane wrapping crackling under his thumb. "Do you want one?"

I shake my head. He plops down next to me and lights up. He has a long face and close-cropped hair, and he squints each time he takes a drag.

"What are you thinking about?" he asks.

"Look, I'm not interested," I say.

He nods. "You already have a guy."

"I'm just not interested."

He sucks on his cigarette but doesn't move. "What are you doing way out here?"

"I could ask you the same."

"I needed a break from the scene back there. Carnival is kicking it this year, but it's crazier than ever. I just went walking."

Darkness is falling, ready to smother the day. I can feel him waiting for me to keep the conversation going. Finally, I say, "I was thinking about my father."

"What about him?"

"Do you know that he forgot my mother's birthday this year?"

"No, I didn't know."

I smile despite myself. Then, for no good reason, I tell him about the parking space.

"It doesn't mean anything," he says. He tosses his cigarette out in front of him, watching as it travels in an arc like a meteor. "That's what you want me to say, right?"

"You can say whatever you want."

"In that case, you're really pretty." He smiles. "That isn't what you meant, is it?"

I turn away sharply and squeeze my eyes shut.

"You're sure you don't want one?" he asks. I know he's holding out the cigarettes. But I stay as still and as quiet as I can, until he finally leaves.

ASPHODEL

He was dead so he was only a puff
of smoke at the most and I had to labor to see him
or just to hear and when we spoke it was as
if we were waiting in the rain together
or in a shelter on Ninety-sixth Street or by the
side of a train in Washington, D.C., say,
changing engines and patting each other's stomach
by way of intimacy, and he said what he
wanted most of all, when it came to trains,
was merely to stand on the platform looking out
the dirty window at the water beyond
the row of houses or the stand of trees
for it was *distance* he loved now and the smell of
the ocean, even more than coffee, but it was
only *concoction* for he didn't have the senses
anymore and I forgot to say that
he was a veteran and he wore a green cap
that had "Korea Veteran" printed on the face
with three bright battle ribbons below the lettering
and I forgot to say his ears were large,
the way it sometimes happens in older men,
though he was dead, and he was on the train with
his wife who had red hair of sorts and a dress
that spread out like a tassel of silk, and war
was what we talked about and what the flowers
were, the way a poppy was the emblem
of World War One, and we both laughed at how
there were no flowers for Korea or any
poems for that matter, though he was sad, and although
he wore the hat he said it was a stupid
useless war, unlike Achilles Odysseus
talked to in Hell, who loved his war and treasured
the noses he severed and the livers he ruptured,
and picture them selling their asphodel in front of
a supermarket or a neighborhood bank
and picture us waiting until our ears were long
just to hate just one of their dumb butcheries.

—*Gerald Stern*

On Sunday, after another night with the cows, I walk back into Las Tablas. It looks like it always looks this time of year: stuffed with people, silk banners that say either "Calle Abajo" or "Calle Arriba" hanging from second-floor balconies, venders on street corners, paper remnants of firecrackers that were set off the night before scattered on the ground like leaves. I stop at a stand where an old Chinese man is selling chicken. He's sitting on a folding chair behind a table with two rotisserie cookers turning slowly behind him. I buy a chicken leg for ten cents.

I'm standing on the sidelines, watching a pickup truck with a brass band on its flatbed lumber down the street and eating my chicken when Yesenia comes running in my direction and plants herself in front of me.

"You have real nerve," she says.

"What did I do?"

She's wearing the same thing as the last time I saw her, only she's soaking wet. She's also drunk.

" 'What did I do? What did I do?' " she says mockingly. "It's not like you know everything, Katia. You think you're so much better than me and Mami. You think you have everything figured out and that we're such fools."

"I don't think you're a fool."

Yesenia crosses her arms and raises her eyebrows.

Well, if she really wants to get into it: "I do think it's foolish, though, ignoring everything that's going on," I say. "You're just letting him get away with it."

"Ha! That's what Chato told me you'd say."

"You *knew* I thought that."

"Did you ever—" Her ankle gives and she stumbles on her wedge heels for a second before steadying herself. "Did you ever think that maybe it's you who is making everything worse? I mean, if I were Papi, I wouldn't exactly want to come home if I knew someone was waiting there to yell at me every time I did."

"I wouldn't yell at him if he started coming home."

"But you do! You yell at him every time."

"If he started being there regularly, not just once every few weeks, it would be different."

"But how is he ever going to know that? I mean, how would he ever find that out if he can't bring himself to come home because of all your carrying on?"

"You think I'm the reason he's not coming home more?"

"Maybe."

"You think I'm the reason Papi left us?"

She crosses her arms and blinks drowsily. "It's a possibility."

"Go away," I say.

She tuts. "Just like with Papi. That's the same thing you do to him."

"Yesenia, you're drunk. This is stupid."

"No, I was thinking about this on the ride here, when I was perfectly sober. I think you are the reason Papi won't come back to us." She waits. When I don't respond, she says, "I talked to Chato about it and he agrees with me."

"Chato probably wasn't even listening to you when you said all this. He never listens to you—in case you had the wrong idea about that, too."

No one is paying the least bit of attention to us. People get into fights all the time during Carnival. Girls fighting over guys. People fighting for space. Certain Panama City gangs come to Las Tablas just looking for an excuse to start something. And now Yesenia and I, yelling at each other while a parade glides by.

Yesenia grabs my wrist and squeezes. "You don't know anything about Chato," she says.

"Really? I know he's a jerk. He's always been a jerk. You would know that if you weren't so desperate to have a boyfriend." I'm practically hissing at her now, pointing my chicken bone in her face.

Yesenia recoils a bit. "Well, excuse me if it seems like I always need a guy, but I've never had Papi, like you do. Like you *always* have."

It takes me a second, but I say, "Neither of us has him now, anyway."

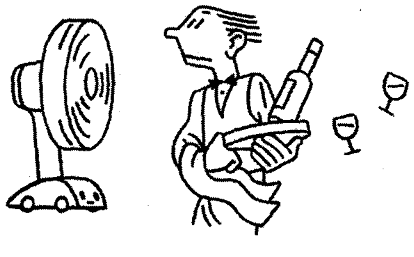
"Your fault, not mine."

"Yesenia! It's not *my* fault that Papi is being a jerk. Just like Chato *is* a jerk," I add. I can't help it.

She gives my arm a violent tug and tightens her grip on my wrist. I can smell the alcohol on her breath worming through the air as she starts to speak, first in a whisper: "You stay the fuck away from me." Then, "You stay the *goddam fuck away from me!*" Immediately, I don't know why or where from, tears spring to my eyes.

She's just drunk, I keep telling myself as I watch her stagger away. She's just drunk.

I stand still for a few minutes, the colors of the Carnival queens blurry through my tears. When a guy walks by with a cart of Dixie cups filled with shots of rum, I take one. Then I chase after him down the sidelines of the parade and take another. When a bubble of people looses itself from the crowd and lurches in a big lump into the street, I go with them. And when one of the decorated cars in the parade honks and I turn to see a guy beckoning me up, I take his hands and climb clumsily onto the hood of the car. Everyone is cheering and it's not long before the car drives through a spray of water from one of the cistern trucks positioned along the street. I'm drenched and I think to myself, Here we go. Even though I came to get away, here I am again in the middle of Carnival. I'm dancing on the hood of a car in a white knee-length skirt and a lavender T-shirt, my black bathing suit underneath, my wet hair tapping my back like a paddle as I move. The rum kicks in a little more. The guy driving the car is whooping at me as I bend my knees a little, feeling the beat as if I were rolling a hula hoop around my waist, my raised arms moving from side to side. People in the crowd are squirting water guns and tossing confetti, which sticks to me like stamps. The smell of incense and alcohol hangs in the air. I go for about a block before I see the guy, the one from last night. He has his shirt tied around his waist and is eating an ice-cream cone. I jump off the car and half land on him. He stumbles a little and then, when he sees it's me, stands still. We're close enough that our stomachs are almost touching. His breath smells like strawberry.



"Where did you get that?" I ask, pointing to the ice cream.

He steps back and holds it in front of me. "You want some?"

When I take too long to answer, he licks it.

"I want some," I decide.

He offers me the cone, but I push it aside, take his face in my hands, and kiss him. His milky lips stick lightly to mine. "I just wanted a taste," I say, still holding him, the stubble on his jaw rough under my palms.

Later, at the edge of the field, walking in a graceless teeter before passing out, I remember the first night my father didn't come home. Yesenia shook me awake in my bed after midnight and said, "Papi isn't here." With tears in her eyes and the keys already in her hand, she convinced me to ride around in the car with her, searching for him. "What if something's happened?" she kept whispering, half to me and half to herself.

I was sitting in the passenger seat, in my pajamas, while my sister yanked the car through its gears and we rumbled through the eerily quiet city streets. As we peered intently through the windshield and the side windows for a glimpse of him, she said, "Papi has that funny little mustache comb." The sound of her trembling voice cut through the dark.

I said, "I know, the one he keeps on the sink behind the faucet."

"And he always wears the same kind of loafers."

"Until the soles crack and then he gets a new pair of the same kind."

She turned down side streets and idled the car at red lights. "His face is always oily when I kiss him. Not that I kiss him very often. He kisses you more. When he gets home or whatever. He kisses your cheek right away."

"He doesn't do it that much anymore."

A few seconds passed before she picked up again. "He always smells like cologne, too."

We went on like this, trading impressions, until finally we pulled back into our driveway, having found no trace of him. Yesenia sobbed, her hands still gripping the steering wheel even after she had turned the car off. "I know something awful has happened to him," she said. "I know it."

The following night, while my mother, Yesenia, and I sat silently at the kitchen table, my father breezed in as though nothing had happened and started making his customary Scotch-and-water. Yesenia started crying again and rushed to wrap her arms around him.

"What is this?" he asked innocently.

"Where have you been?" I said. My relief gave way under the weight of sudden anger.

"Out," he said, and took a sip of his drink.

My mother didn't say a word. She just looked at her hands clasped on the table.

"We were worried," Yesenia said.

"There was no need."

"You didn't come home last night," I pointed out.

He took another sip of his Scotch before setting it on the counter and opening the refrigerator. His eyes were bloodshot, his shirt rumpled and untucked. I stood up and poured his drink down the drain. The ice cubes skated haphazardly in the basin.

Yesenia frowned at me. "I'll make you another," she said, as our father turned to see what I had done.

I grabbed the Scotch before she could reach it and poured the whole bottle down the drain.

"What are you doing?" Yesenia wailed.

"He doesn't deserve it," I said. I turned to my father and said, "You don't deserve it."

"Katia, please," he said softly.

"Please what?"

"I was gone for one night. That's all. I'm here now."

AUDUBON GUIDE TO NEIGHBORS
Larry Hat

I knew it was the start of something, though. I'd heard the stories of friends' fathers leaving.

I shook my head. "Don't do this to us."

"Listen," he said, his voice hardening. "You don't need to accuse me of anything. I'm here now. End of story." He breathed out steadily through his nose. Yesenia didn't talk to me after we went to bed that night. She drew the covers over her head and wouldn't even look my way.

I wake to the sound of my name being called over and over. My head is throbbing and I've drooled enough to make the pat of dirt under my face soften into mud. There are other people, like freckles, all over the field now, people like us who must have waited too long to get a hotel room within fifty miles of Las Tablas. I squint through the dazzling morning sun and try to look in the direction the sound is coming from. Slowly, my eyes focus on Yesenia, running in a zigzag, stumbling in the loose soil. I stand up and call to her. She pauses—she's holding both hands against one side of her face—then starts toward me, screaming my name louder now and repeating, "Oh, my God, oh, my God."

When she gets close enough I see blood seeping through her fingers. She has her head tilted so that the blood lands on the ground with soft taps, like the patter of rain.

"What happened?"

"Katia," is all she says, gasping.

I try to pry her hands from her face, but she holds them firm.

"Yesenia, what happened? You have to tell me."

"Chato," she says.

"What did he do? Does it hurt?"

She says nothing. She's just standing in front of me barefoot, blood oozing from her face.

"Let me see it."

"No."

I take a deep breath and pick up my bag. "Then we have to take you to a doctor."

I wonder how she found me way out here. She might have been running around screaming my name for hours. I start walking to find a medical station—temporary ones are set up for Carnival—

and she follows me, as I knew she would, as I wanted her to.

"What the hell did he do to you?" I turn back once to ask.

But she just shakes her head and holds her cheek until we make it to a doctor.

Yesenia gets seven stitches in a little horseshoe shape on her face. I'm allowed to watch, but when the procedure is over, while Yesenia is getting instructions from the nurse on how to tend the wound, the doctor leads me outside. I ask him what happened. This whole time, I've been imagining that Chato thrust something at her—a branch, a fork—and that it broke the skin. Or that they got into a fight and he slapped her, one of his ragged nails catching her flesh.

The doctor says, "She was bitten. It's quite clear that it was a human bite. It could have been worse. The person who bit your sister—his or her teeth never clenched together fully. If they had, she might have lost a small piece of her face."

As soon as Yesenia comes out, I tell her I'm taking her home.

"We'll find a taxi," I say. Who knows what a four-hour taxi ride will cost, but we have to get out of here.

Yesenia has a square of gauze taped to the side of her face like a miniature opaque window. Otherwise, she looks O.K. Tired, but O.K.

"Wait," she says, and starts riffling through the tiny purse slung across her body. "I have the keys to Chato's car," she says, dangling them in the air. "Chato made me hold onto them. He didn't want anything in his pockets." As soon as she says his name, she nearly starts crying.

Are you going to tell me what he did? I want to say, and, in the next second, You're better off without him. But I say neither. Instead, I hug her. Her head falls on my shoulder and she lets me hold her, my hands against her bare back, feeling the quick crescendo of inhalations as my sister sobs in my arms.

Except for a guitar pick hanging from the rearview mirror which knocks against the windshield every time we hit a pothole, it's quiet inside the car as we start toward home. We were quiet the whole ride here, but now the silence is different, the timbre one of tentative forgiveness. Once, I remember kissing that guy, whoever he was, his strawberry lips, and the thought of it ignites a smile that sticks with me for a few kilometres.

We stop for food at a thatch-covered restaurant with outdoor tables, where we order tomato salads and fried corn cakes and where the flies land on our water glasses every few seconds, even though we shoo them absent-mindedly.

"Does it hurt?" I ask Yesenia at the table. I've resolved not to ask her more than that. If she wants to, she'll tell me what happened.

"It's still numb," she says.

I nod, and we keep eating. For dessert, we each get a coconut Popsicle to eat in the car.

A few hours later, we arrive back in the city. We're stopped at a light when I think I see our father. "Look," I say to Yesenia, and I point to a man carrying an armful of pink carnations, snaking through the stopped cars.

"Papi," she gasps.

I wind down the window and whistle. As he walks over, something bobs in my throat. I glance at the stoplight, which is still red. I can't decide whether I want it to stay that way or to turn.

"*Jovencita*," he says, when he's close enough.

As soon as he speaks, as soon as I look at him again, I know it's not my father. I shake my head.

"Three dollars for the whole bouquet," he says.

It's uncanny, though, how alike they look.

"I'm sorry," I say, and start to close the window.

Then, from over my shoulder, I hear Yesenia shout, "We miss you!"

The man wipes his nose with his hand and repeats his offer. The light turns, and, the window still half open, I press my foot to the gas, leaving the man in the middle of the street.

"It wasn't him," I say, even though I know she knows. She knows as well as I do that our father is lost to us, that he's not coming back. Yesenia and I have been fighting from different corners, but we're in the same ring.

"We miss you," Yesenia says once more, quietly this time, to the dashboard.

I put my hand on her knee and navigate toward home. ♦

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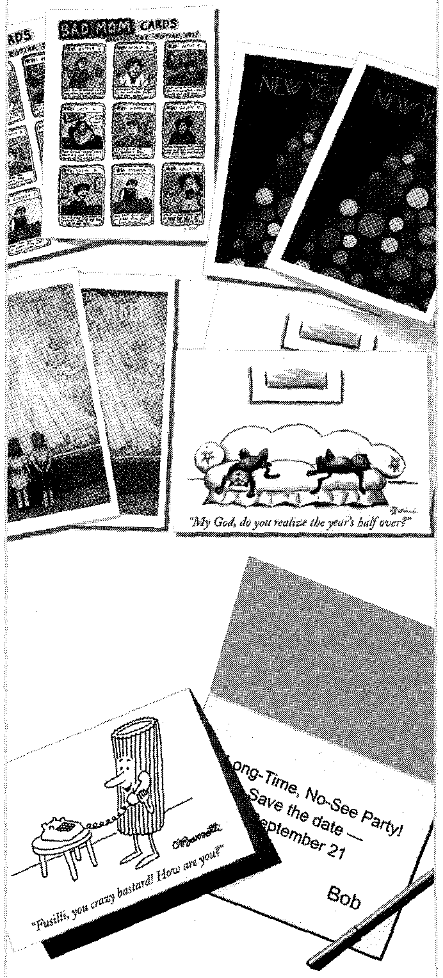
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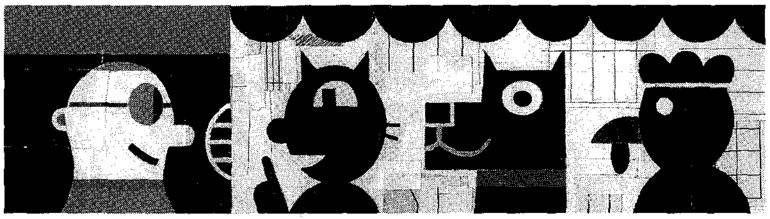


GERALD SCARFE

A CRITIC AT LARGE

LIFE OF THE PARTY

Benjamin Disraeli and the politics of performance.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

When Lytton Strachey's "Eminent Victorians" was published, in 1918, it included, in addition to the portraits of his leading characters, cameos of almost all the other famous Victorians: Cardinal Newman is alongside Cardinal Manning in Manning's chapter; Gladstone is glimpsed in the chapter on General Gordon; and Lord Palmerston is visible, grimacing, behind Florence Nightingale. The only Victorian of eminence missing in the ironic gallery is the most ironic of them all, Benjamin Disraeli: man of fashion, satiric novelist, twice Prime Minister, and the dominant figure of the Conservative Party in Britain from 1846 until his death, in 1881.

The reason for leaving him out is plain: Strachey's figures, large and small, are invariably studies in that sanctimonious hypocrisy which Strachey imagined to be the keynote of the period. And of all the things that Disraeli was—mocker and opportunist, hired gun and flatterer, gadfly and courtier—the one thing that no one could ever call him was sanctimonious and hypocritical. Disraeli is Milton's Satan set loose in Tennyson's rookery, the energy principle that helps keep the landscape around him from being merely pious. Though cast as a conservative, he was at heart a romantic adventurer, in the line that stretches from Byron to D'Annunzio, a political dreamer who was also, uniquely among such dreamers, a skilled manager of men. His verve, along with what he called his "sense of the ridiculous," makes the six-volume biography of him by his admirers Monypenny and Buckle (completed in 1920) one of the most entertaining biographies in English. Robert Blake wrote a much read biography in the nineteen-sixties, and now Christopher Hibbert, the veteran English popular historian, has published a new life, "Disraeli: The Victorian Dandy Who Became Prime Minister" (Palgrave; $29.95), joined, in Britain, anyway, by William Kuhn's "The Politics of Pleasure: A Portrait of Benjamin Disraeli" (Free Press; £20).

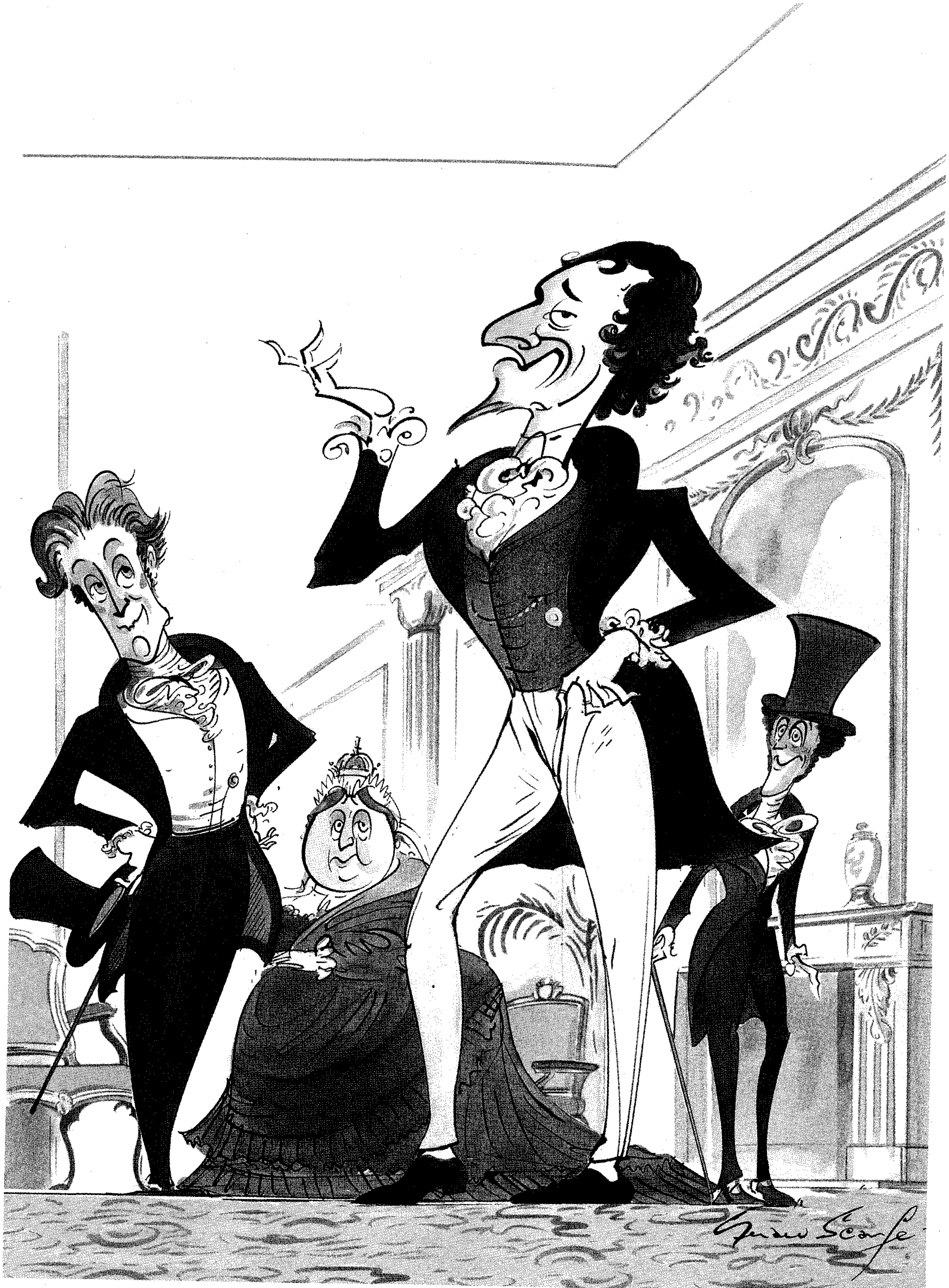
One reason that Disraeli is such an appealing subject is that, unlike other romantic adventurers, he had a successful career and a happy life. Things worked out pretty much as he had planned, even though the plan was one of the most improbable ever devised by the mind of man: a debt-scarred, overdressed, effeminate, literary Jew set himself to become Prime Minister of England, and the leader of its right-wing party, at the height of the British Empire. He is himself proof, in slightly comic form, of the principle of heroic imagination that he fabulized so passionately in his fiction. Any responsible historian can see that Disraeli couldn't have happened. But he did.

Disraeli, who was born in London in 1804, had taken Hebrew lessons as a boy, but he underwent baptism, not bar mitzvah, in his thirteenth year. His father, Isaac, an amateur scholar, a well-known miscellaneous essayist, and an uncontentious freethinker, would have been happy for his children to be mere nonbelievers; he baptized them in an offhand moment, after a dispute with his synagogue. The brilliant young Benjamin quickly discovered a loophole in the religion of his countrymen and new fellow-religionists that he eventually drove regiments' worth of ideas through: they seemed to despise a race that their own Holy Scripture taught them to revere, which meant that they weren't hateful, just confused.

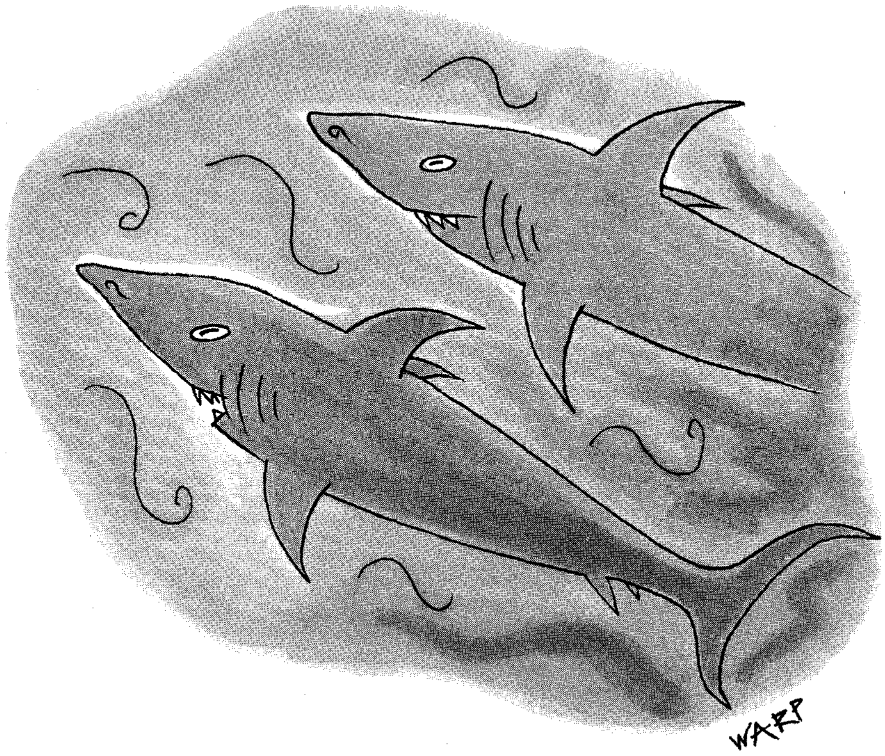
He bounced in and out of second-rate schools, and got most of his education at home—enough Latin to be a decent Latinist and enough Greek to pretend. He loved to read poetry. His father had been a minor member of Byron's circle, and the young Disraeli idolized Byron to a degree exceptional even in that Byron-worshipping age. In 1826, he went off to the Continent on a grand tour on which he found and befriended Byron's old boatman. The idea of Byron then meant "Childe Harold" more than "Don Juan"—not the adventurer on a quest but the wounded young man with a sorrow.

This self-image hardly suited Disraeli's temperament, and he did what would-be Byronic heroes without the means to swim the Hellespont or fight for Greece have always done: he became a dandy. Dandyism is domesticated Byronism: the adventure begins at the waistcoat and ends at the spats. Descriptions of the young Disraeli make him sound like a cross between Cecil Beaton and a member of the Village People; on holiday in Malta, he dressed in full pirate regalia, complete with pistols and daggers. Later, on the political make in London, he wore, according to an affectionate observer, "a scarlet waistcoat, long lace ruffles . . . white gloves, with several brilliant gold rings outside them." His gold chains, worn many at a time, were a wonder, his lacquered black curls an event.

What was he thinking? Partly, it was the natural high spirits of a true flâneur; partly, it involved an astute reading of the English character. The English, he knew, have always liked to have one domesticated foreigner, a professional wild man, around to shock and entertain them (the painter Fuseli played a similar role in the time just before Disraeli), and the worst that could happen was that


Gerald Scarfe

Disraeli surrounded himself with a group of young aristocratic sons, even as he dazzled and beguiled older women.



"God, I love the smell of sunblock in the morning."

• •

people would sneer at him, which they were going to do in any case. "I am Disraeli the adventurer," he said to Lord Derby, the Tory eminence, as he rose to power, meaning that that was his assigned role, for good or ill. Far better to have them sneering at his sleeves and listening to his speeches than treating his rhetoric with the contempt they would have already exhausted on his ruffles.

Though Disraeli called himself a Christian, he was always unapologetically a Jew, name and nose together, and he turned the identity into another romance. "For myself, I look upon the Church as the only Jewish institution that remains," he wrote blandly to a clergyman. (The clergyman's response is unknown.) Yet he knew how to adjust his Jewishness to his audience. He made up a story about the classy antecedents of the D'Israelis that would appeal to readers of Walter Scott. His family had been expelled from Spain in 1492, he explained, and then fled to Venice, where it settled into generations of virtuous Rialto prosperity, before leaving one great island empire for another, propelled by word of Britain's liberal promise and growing power. In fact, as far as he knew, there was neither expulsion nor Rialto anywhere in his background; he came from a simple, mercantile family in northern Italy, which emigrated to England for the usual commercial reasons. But the fairy tale was shrewd: he grasped what kind of Jew would be fascinating to an English audience, and what kind merely Jewish.

His ambition was present, according to intimates, from earliest adulthood. In the eighteen-thirties, Disraeli, not yet even in Parliament, confided to Lord Melbourne, the Whig grandee, that he intended to become Prime Minister someday. (Melbourne sighed.) Desperately in need of money—he was tens of thousands of pounds in debt well into his forties—he began to write gossipy society novels. The first, "Vivian Grey," which he published anonymously, was a roman à clef about a young man's ambition; another tale of a young man's rise, "Contarini Fleming," followed not long after.

He was, and first became known as, a wit; the early books are full of good lines, with the proto-Wilde "Nothing is of so much importance and of so much use to a young man entering life as to be well criticized by women" sitting near the post-Johnsonian "Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory." Disraeli's early, satiric novels feel contemporary, but in a stylized, coloring-book mode. The vision is uncannily like Tom Wolfe's in both tone and subject matter: wonderfully sharp, broad mockery of metropolitan manners combined with weird autodidactic philosophizing and an extraordinary idealization of a nonmetropolitan class of heroes. Bad, grasping, status-obsessed city people are relentlessly contrasted with broad-shouldered, straight-shooting, plain-talking country heroes. In Wolfe the heroes are astronauts and race-car drivers and Atlanta developers; in Disraeli they are the country gentry, rough and tough and honest and beautiful, the flower of the land. In both writers, there is a clear sense that the author is one of the status-obsessed city people—an indication that the thing isn't meant to be taken entirely seriously, and that the folk heroes are in part a construction meant for beating over the heads of other metropolitans.

The novels of the eighteen-thirties made Disraeli notorious, and the notoriety gave him a political chance, in an era when seats in Parliament could still be more or less disposed of as society baubles. But he needed money first, and the best way he knew to get it was to marry it. He won the hand, and the purse, of Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, a wealthy older widow. Disraeli, as Hibbert's well-turned account makes plain, had a genius for older women—he played Queen Victoria like a violin—and there is no doubt that he wanted one thing from her, and that was not passion. But the marriage was a happy one, and when his wife died, in 1872, Disraeli was bereft. (She herself said, "Dizzy married me for my money. But if he had the chance again, he would marry me for love.")

In 1837, after four failed attempts, he won a Parliament seat for Maidstone. The political scene that Disraeli entered was at once fossil-filled and fluid, in the manner of a tar pit. Power lay with an oligarchy of aristocrats, who were divided into two groups: Whigs, representing the descendants, real and spiritual, of the lords who had forced a narrow settlement on the British monarchy in 1689, and including both men like Lord Melbourne, who hated the idea of change, and a handful of more cosmopolitan souls, like Lord John Russell, who saw the necessity of reform; and a Conservative Party under the Duke of Wellington, whose members tended to be more brutally authoritarian, High Church Royalist, and reactionary. There was also a handful of Radicals from the nascent industrial North. The closest thing to popular representatives in Parliament, they are sympathetic to us today, but, as true free marketers, they were actually the ones who fought hardest against industrial reform, including child-labor laws. To confuse things further, there was also an Irish nationalist group. And behind it all stood a sullen population, increasingly urbanized and oppressed, denied suffrage but capable of occasional mass action of a warningly violent kind.

This meant that though there was very little popular representation, there was room for maneuver among the clans. One could be, in effect, a conservative Radical (a radical libertarian who was opposed to government intervention in factories) or a radical Conservative (an upholder of ancient institutions who believed that the English constitution had to be recast in order to stave off popular rebellion). It was the second approach that Disraeli began to contemplate, and in Parliament he adopted a group of romantic-minded aristocratic sons who were on fire with the idea of some vast national reawakening. They had taken the flattering name of Young England, and he supplied them with ideas to match their notions.

It was in his novels of the eighteen-forties—especially "Coningsby; or, The New Generation" and "Sybil; or, The Two Nations"—that Disraeli began to articulate his odd brand of romantic nationalism, flattery of the upper class, and indignation about the condition of the English working class. In "Coningsby," a young aristocrat of that name ("with a mien as graceful as his countenance was captivating") meets in the forest a strange Jewish sage, a kind of *yiddishe* Gandalf. Sidonia, as the author calls him ("Disraeli" presumably having been judged too direct), inspires new political reflections in the open-mouthed aristocrat, and Disraeli elaborates his central idea that English constitutional arrangements after the revolution of 1688 were fatally "Venetian": like the government of imperial Venice, the oligarchs picked a Doge of curtailed powers and manipulated him for their own interests.

In England, the oligarchs' power had been reinforced by a "Manchester school" of middle-class capitalists devoted to free trade. The oligarchs squeezed the farmers; the capitalists squeezed the workers; and both squeezed the soul out of national life. "Man is made to adore and obey," Sidonia tells the young aristocrat, "but if you will not command him, if you will give him nothing to worship, he will fashion his own divinities and find a chieftain in his own passions." "But where can we find faith in a nation of sectaries?" Coningsby asks. "Who can feel loyalty to a sovereign of Downing Street?"

In real life, no doubt, Disraeli would have coughed significantly and pointed to his velvet waistcoat, but in the novel he goes on to sketch an approaching millennium where a new nationalism, rooted in the restoration of faith in the monarch, allows men once again to adore and obey. Though populist, the program is radically antidemocratic; Disraeli in this period used "democratic" as a scare word, and in "Coningsby" he suggested giving up on Parliament altogether, letting the newspapers do the work of opposition. In this Gothic Revival welfare state, the middle class is very middle, the aristocrats are very grand, and the common people dance and are grateful.

It is also a land happily inhabited by strong and limber young men of good breeding, whose handsome looks are catalogued. A salacious imagination is not needed to wonder about the sexual orientation of a man who dresses up in pirate garb, writes novels gasping after gorgeous, ignorant young lords, enjoys a series of passionate friendships with handsome younger men, has his closest female relations with sisters and much older women, and defends, as Disraeli did, the love life of the Turks. Most of his biographers now settle on the formula that he was, in our sense, a closeted gay man, and the question is whether his inclinations were acted upon or not. Hibbert, like Blake, seems to think not, though it is hard to imagine so vivid a man utterly without an outlet, chastity being a stranger perversion than secrecy. Kuhn, on the other hand, is categorical and convincing: he has Disraeli come back from his adventures in the baths of Turkey announcing that he will never be married, and fully conscious of his love for men. Reading about his life, one is reminded that Victorian gents were far less "Victorian" than we are about human behavior, far saner about trivialities. (On at least two occasions, Disraeli's political career would certainly have suffered a hard landing had he been judged by today's standards. Once, he unconsciously plagiarized part of a funeral oration; the case was rightly shrugged off by the respectable press—proof was hardly needed that Dizzy was an original-minded man. And once, while in power, he offered a peerage to a supporter who had reorganized his debts at lower interest.)

Disraeli's English history was, in any event, partly fantasy—a bedtime story served up for his none too bright young acolytes, a kind of "Ring" cycle designed for Bertie Wooster—and partly an early, genuine expression of the antibourgeois reaction that has been such a potent strain in modern politics. He had a strong sense of self-irony, and he knew who his heroes really were and what they were really worth; a later character says that what he admires about the English aristocrats is "that they live in the air, that they excel in athletic sports, that they can only speak one language, and that they never read." Disraeli loved them anyway, for what they could become.

Disraeli's project was to make his romance of the few seem at least plausible, and he did. He seized his opportunity in 1846, when the Conservative Prime Minister, Robert Peel, in response to a threatened famine in Ireland, moved to end the Corn Laws, which provided import tariffs that protected English agriculture and English landowners. Disraeli, who had written Peel begging for Cabinet office only a few years earlier, had never cared much about the Corn Laws, but in the confusion of the aristocrats near him he sensed an opening. From the backbenches, he began a campaign of personal attack against Peel.

"He used sarcasm," the Monty Python victim wails about one of the dangerous Piranha Brothers. That was the weapon that Disraeli had at hand, too. Not impassioned pleas for fairness or principle—simply the stiletto of sarcasm, inserted repeatedly into a vulnerable back. Disraeli was brutal, and brilliant. The issue was not the Corn Laws but Peel's betrayal of his class and followers:

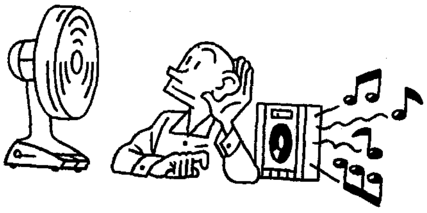
> There is no doubt a difference in the right honourable gentleman's demeanour as leader of the Opposition and as Minister of the Crown. But that's the old story: you must not contrast too strongly the hours of courtship with the years of possession. . . . I remember him making his protection speeches. They were the best speeches I ever heard. It was a great thing to hear the right honorable gentleman say: "I would sooner be the leader of the gentlemen of England than possess the confidence of Sovereigns." We don't hear much of the "gentlemen of England" now. But what of that? They have the pleasures of memory—the charms of reminiscences. They were his first love, and though he may not kneel to them now as in the hour of passion, still they can recall the past; and nothing is more useless or unwise than these scenes of crimination and reproach, for we know that in all these cases, when the beloved object has ceased to charm, it is in vain to appeal to the feelings.

The Irish politician Daniel O'Connell said after one of Disraeli's speeches in the Corn Laws debate, "I should have said that it was one of the ablest speeches I ever heard in the House of Commons, but for the invective . . . and that made it incomparable." When the debate was over, Peel had succeeded in getting the Corn Laws repealed (and Disraeli never returned to the subject; free trade worked). But the Conservative Party had broken in two, and Disraeli soon found himself the leader of one half—"the false English nobles and their Jew," as the poet Coventry Patmore scoffed.

Why did they follow him? They hardly knew. Their personal prejudice against him lessened as they got to know him better; he was sensitive as well as clever and, for all his egotism, a superb organizer. Yet their prejudice against his kind—not just a Jew but a Jew adventurer, and not just a Jew adventurer but also a Jew adventurer-novelist—remained. He succeeded because there were just enough of them just clever enough to know just how much cleverer he was than they were. And he had perfected a way of managing any threats to his position: the moment someone gently hinted that he might step aside and let a real gentleman lead the Conservatives, he immediately agreed, with good cheer, and announced his intention to retire—an intolerable and even suicidal prospect for the Party. English gentlemen were used to hiring barristers and surgeons and gamekeepers. Why not hire the best arguer in the house?

Above all, most came to like and trust him, because they could see that he genuinely loved and admired them. In the hundreds of letters quoted in Monypenny and Buckle, he is often inconsistent—taking a position that, a few months before, he had condemned—but he is never two-faced. He gossips, but he does not betray. The other side of his sarcasm was complete sincerity in a few key emotions: regard for his wife, love of place, and a love for country squires, their houses and lands and families—the gentlemen of England. He shared all their prejudices except the one against himself.

Throughout the late eighteen-forties and the eighteen-fifties, when the Prime Ministership of the country was largely monopolized by the great Whig peers Russell and Palmerston, Disraeli continued to show remarkable audacity in matters small and large. He was opposed to what he considered Palmerston's pious Liberal adventurism, and particularly to the Crimean War, which he saw as a mismanaged folly, in which nothing vital was at stake. He stood by his friend Lionel de Rothschild, who was elected to Parliament and couldn't take the oath of office, because it required swearing "on the true faith of a Christian"; and, shortly after the confrontation with Peel, he published a kind of proto-Zionist novel, "Tancred," in which a questing young English nobleman—again guided by Sidonia—spurns Parliament for Palestine, where he finds spiritual renewal and learns that "the life and property of England are protected by the laws of Sinai," and that Christianity is merely what Disraeli elsewhere called "completed Judaism," a notion that set the fox among the Anglican chickens. It was an act of such chutzpah that it did him no harm.



Disraeli arrived at last in 1867, after a complicated fracture in the Whig-Radical alliance that had dominated Parliament for so long. Under great popular pressure, and working with support only from a minority, while leveraging the votes of the Radicals on the other side, Disraeli brought in a reform bill that greatly expanded suffrage among the men of the English working class. It was a masterly piece of parliamentary jujitsu; it also affirmed a principle of democracy that seemed contrary to everything that Disraeli and the Conservative Party had always stood for.

His biographers still debate whether Disraeli was acting out of a visionary principle of "Tory democracy" or simply maneuvering to keep power and to "dish the Whigs." Some of his closest collaborators, including the eventual Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, suspected that it was all tactics without principle, and his great rival Gladstone was sure of it. Yet Disraeli may well have had an authentic ideological motive, if at one remove: he seems to have hoped that an enfranchised working class might unite with the landowning classes against big business. He spoke of his dream of "reestablishing Toryism on a national foundation," one that transcended the landowners to take in the people. It was a gamble that, in the short term, he lost; in the fall of 1868, the expanded electorate immediately returned Gladstone and Liberalism to power.

By far the most searching study of Disraeli's politics can be found in Trollope's political novel "Phineas Redux," written in 1870-71, and taking the contest over the franchise as one of its themes. Trollope's Disraeli character, called Daubeny (a disapproving hint of playacting, daubing and painting, is lodged in the name), having already betrayed his followers over the franchise, now tries to keep the Conservatives in power, still in tacit alliance with the Radicals, by undertaking the other great taboo act, the disestablishment of the Church of England. His natural supporters are scandalized but impotent, Trollope sees, having so long ago handed over their independent judgment to his

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superior cunning. And, of course, his Liberal opponent, here called Gresham, is driven to near-hysterical indignation.

Trollope's Daubeny is certainly not a man of principle, but the novelist sees him as something more than an opportunist, and certainly not as a cynic. For him, it is the task of those who govern to recognize when the political ground has already shifted beneath their feet, and to ease the passing of the actual into the legal. As Disraeli declared after the Reform Bill was enacted, "In a progressive country change is constant; and the great question is not whether you should resist change which is inevitable, but whether that change should be carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the laws, the traditions of the people, or in deference to abstract principles and arbitrary and general doctrines." The line between Oakeshottian improvisation and outright opportunism is a fine and high one, but Disraeli walked it, and kept his balance.

At the same time, Disraeli, as Trollope understood, saw that being in power means that all the practical prerogatives of power—things as large as the appointment of bishops, the Supreme Court Justices of the day, and as small as the awarding of "places" and honors—remain in the hands of one group rather than another. Dizzy had a kind of romantic-aesthetic spirituality, but he saw organized religion as a useful civic support, with spoils to be divided fairly among the various sects. After being taken to hear a sermon preached at Westminster Abbey, he remarked, "I would not have missed the sight for anything—the darkness, the lights, the marvelous windows." This is not a secondary but a primary part of governing, since it sustains the social networks that make politics possible. Politics, for Disraeli, was as much about preferment as about policy—or, rather, he thought that principle is exercised as well through preferment as through policy.

Disraeli's ability to seize both the moment and the moral high ground was best displayed when he was returned to power in 1874, after Gladstone had exhausted even the new voters. It was then that Disraeli brought in an aggressive program of social legislation, the foundation of the modern welfare state: a pure-food-and-drug act; acts expanding the rights of trade unions; legislation against tenement housing and what remained of child labor. The insurgent industrialists were forced to conform to a set of social rules.

His objective, underlined and declared in every novel, was to keep effective power out of the hands of the middle classes by making a nationalist alliance between the lords and the landless. At the same time as he was building social protections, he was also, shrewdly, becoming a much more militant nationalist and Big Englander; he arranged (through a loan from his friends the Rothschilds) for England to buy a crucial stake in the Suez Canal, and he made Queen Victoria Empress, not merely overseer, of India. At the 1878 Congress of Berlin, where the great powers gathered to thrash out treaties and borders, Disraeli proved so skillful a maneuverer that Bismarck commented, "*Der alte Jude, das ist der Mann*"—the old Jew, that is the man. Disraeli grasped instinctively that nationalism was the adhesive that would reconcile old wealth to new voters. When he left the House of Commons, in 1876, it was as the benevolent encourager of trade unions and working-class rights, and as a custodian of Empire. He went on to serve in the House of Lords, as Lord Beaconsfield, for five years, rising from the upper benches to oppose Gladstone's crusade against Christian suffering in the Balkans. "Of all the Bulgarian horrors, perhaps the greatest," he wrote to Derby, heartlessly, of Gladstone's moralizing pamphlet on the necessity of intervention.

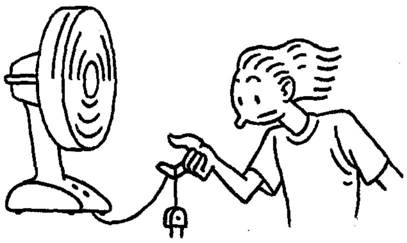
Various efforts have been made to claim Disraeli as the godfather of modern Anglo-American conservatism, but this is a paternity more improbable than any Disraeli ever concocted for himself. The essence of his politics lay in keeping the forces of capitalism under the tight rein of traditional influences and government legislation, and in keeping the middle class out of power. Modern conservatism is a proudly bourgeois movement—internationalist (rather than cosmopolitan) in outlook, designed to benefit business by unleashing the free market, and claiming rhetorically, at least, to sustain the dominance of the middle classes. Mrs. Thatcher's ideological brilliance was to insist on Manchester-school politics to the exclusion of all else; the people who brought her down were the heirs of Disraeli, anxious about her rejection of the public welfare and more than a little snobbish about her openly middle-class antecedents. In America, the conservatism in power is rooted in three of the things he most despised: unquestioning faith in the free market, public displays of narrow religiosity (he called ritualism in church "high jinks"), and wars fought for the moral improvement of foreigners. If there is a modern society he would have admired, it would have been that of Gaullist France, which embodied his dream of a strong authoritarian executive, an educated élite exercising the levers of power, and a people made safe from capitalist insecurity through the workings of a paternalistic government. (He would also have shared the Gaullist faith in a national cultural politics; many of the core Old Master pictures, including the great Botticellis and a Piero, in the London National Gallery were bought at his behest.)

Remote as he is from us—and no one seems likely to relaunch a political movement through a vision of romantic country gentlemen acting on behalf of an enslaved proletariat—there is still something immensely cheering about reading his story. He was a child of circumstances who made the best of them, and a genuine wit whose life shows how a liberal democracy can turn a poet of vision into a man of sense. He wrote to an aristocratic lady friend he was courting after his wife's death, "My imagination did not desert me with my youth. I have always felt this a great misfortune. It would have involved me in calamities, had not nature bestowed on me, and in a large degree, another quality—the sense of the ridiculous." His mixture of wild illusion and ironic insight allowed him to do what a mere realist could not: help a ruling class resign its right to rule without destroying its self-respect, or denying its illusions, most of which persist to this day. In poetry or politics, a Romantic with a sense of the ridiculous can do great things. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Old Filth, *by Jane Gardam (Europa; $14.95).* This mordantly funny novel examines the life of Sir Edward Feathers, a desiccated barrister known to colleagues and friends as Old Filth (the nickname stands for "Failed in London Try Hong Kong"). After a lucrative career in Asia, Filth settles into retirement in Dorset. With anatomical precision, Gardam reveals that, contrary to appearances, Sir Edward's life is seething with incident: a "raj orphan," whose mother died when he was born and whose father took no notice of him, he was shipped from Malaysia to Wales (cheaper than England) and entrusted to a foster mother who was cruel to him. What happened in the years before he settled into school, and was casually adopted by his best friend's kindly English country family, haunts, corrodes, and quickens Filth's heart; Gardam's prose is so economical that no moment she describes is either gratuitous or wasted.

Living on Air, *by Anna Shapiro (Soho; $22).* Growing up in nineteen-sixties Levittown, a precocious fourteen-year-old shrinks from the "urchins of plumbers" who share her prefab suburb, disdain her weekly trips to the library, and call her Volkswagen-driving parents "Communists." Preternaturally sensitive to class differences, she secretly applies to the preppie Bay Farm School, where she lurks on the fringes of "bright, cosseted teenagers" whose pedigreed fathers "didn't bother having jobs." There's a fairy-tale quality to this story of a poor girl, nose pressed to the windowpane, obsessively cataloguing the habits of that mysterious tribe the rich—their carelessly worn Pucci nightgowns, their clambakes in Maine. Shapiro, in her third novel, is finely attuned to the self-consciousness and vulnerability of adolescence, and the slippery elision of money and sophistication.



The One Percent Doctrine, *by Ron Suskind (Simon & Schuster; $27).* In November, 2001, Suskind writes, Vice-President Dick Cheney announced that if there was "a one percent chance" that a threat was real "we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response." He added, "It's not about our analysis, or finding a preponderance of evidence." This view of a White House dangerously indifferent to facts is familiar from, among other sources, Suskind's "The Price of Loyalty," but he adds much here that is disconcerting, particularly regarding the embrace of torture. (It's hard to shake the image of Bush asking, literally, for Ayman al-Zawahiri's head, which the C.I.A. briefly thought it had found in a riverbed in Afghanistan.) Suskind, whose main source seems to be the former C.I.A. director George Tenet (to whom he is very kind), has made news with revelations about Western Union's coöperation with the C.I.A. and about a plan to release cyanide gas in subways, although it's not clear that this threat was more real than other phantoms the White House chased.

Temptations of the West, *by Pankaj Mishra (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $25).* Mishra, a Hindu, has been accused in his native India of "pandering to white pro-Muslim audiences in the West"—a notion that, he points out, was "optimistic" even before September 11th. In this acute survey of South and Central Asia (including Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Tibet), he reports on how countries are facing the crisis of modernization, hobbled by political corruption, poverty, and the abiding hatred of one tribe for another. Particularly illuminating is his chapter on Nepal, which, despite a veneer of regular elections, has long been mired in a battle between monarchy and Communism, both anachronisms in the West. Mishra cautions us not to underestimate "the rage and despair of people who, arriving late in the modern world, have known its primary ideology, democracy, only as another delusion."

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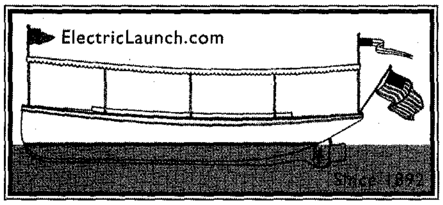

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MUSICAL EVENTS

FAREWELL SYMPHONY

Daniel Barenboim's final concerts in Chicago.

BY ALEX ROSS

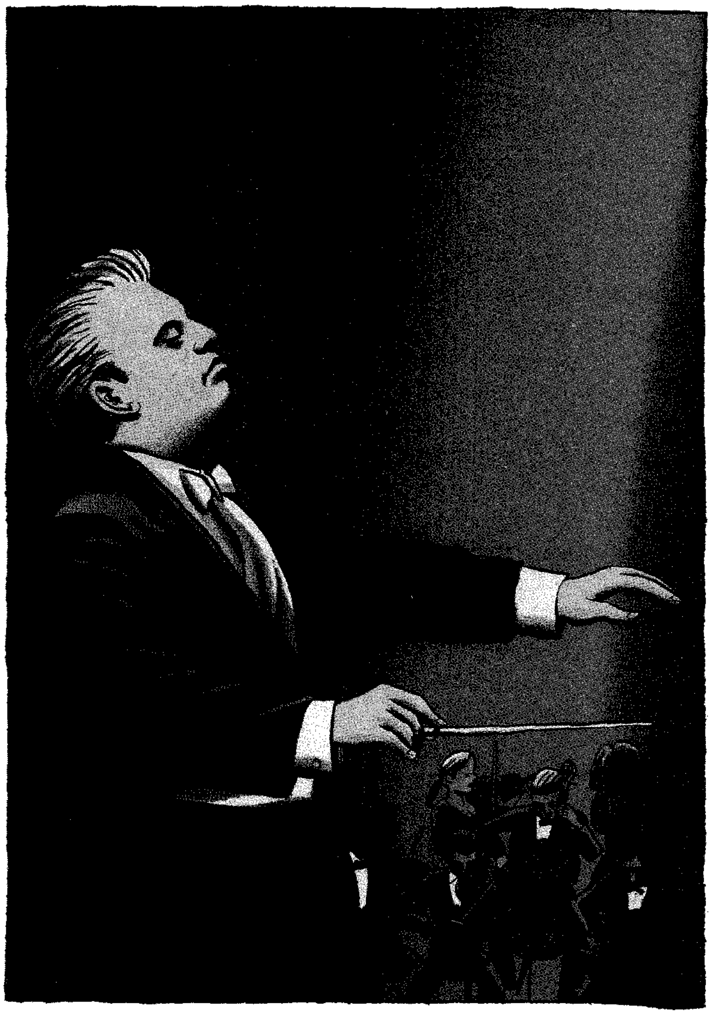
On June 17th, Daniel Barenboim ended his decade-and-a-half run as the music director of the Chicago Symphony with a gritty, impassioned performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Before launching into the work, Barenboim delivered a speech in which he reflected bemusedly on the business of conducting. The celebrated Argentine-Israeli maestro—who has held posts on several continents, maintained a virtuoso piano career, written and lectured widely, and led the remarkable West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, bringing together Israeli and Arab players—spoke aloud the prosaic paradox that so often puzzles newcomers: the conductor is the center of attention, yet he makes no sound. He is, Barenboim said, "permanently dependent on the ability and willingness of the musicians to play in a certain way." A conductor deserves his title, Barenboim went on, only when he has acquired the players' trust. Pride filled Barenboim's voice as he declared that he had gained that trust—for much of his tenure, there was resistance from factions in the orchestra—and that he had just received the unofficial title of Honorary Conductor for Life. He then gave the downbeat for Beethoven's D-minor Allegro ma non troppo. The sound that flowed around him, grimly eloquent at the outset and electrically triumphant at the end, drove home the point.

While most of us incrementally fall to pieces over time, conductors tend to get better with age. Eventually, their legend precedes them; the respect that they have accumulated over the years does as much work as the movement of their hands. This explains how the physically shattered, emotionally unstable Otto Klemperer was, in his later years, able to deliver one staggering performance after another; musicians wanted to write themselves into his saga. Claudio Abbado is another conductor who has recently ascended to the stratosphere, seemingly incapable of giving non-transcendent performances. Barenboim is now sixty-three, and, although he had gravitas even in his youth, something in his work has deepened.

I had an adverse reaction when I first heard the great Chicago orchestra under Barenboim, a decade ago. There was a crude and chaotic quality to the sound: you could still hear the vehement aesthetic of Georg Solti, Barenboim's predecessor, but it lacked Solti's precision. Barenboim conducted with a broad beat, trying at times for profound effects that either he was unable to articulate or the orchestra was unwilling to execute. Now he no longer pushes so hard, for his personality has melded with the orchestra's. His musicianship is old-fashioned; he doesn't go in for glossy perfection, instead favoring sinewy textures, earthy rhythms, freely singing lines. He is at his best in the Viennese classics, in Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Bruckner, where he sways to his heart's content between song and structure.

His last three Chicago concerts, which took place on consecutive nights, featured not only the Beethoven Ninth but also the Ninth Symphonies of Mahler and Bruckner, plus Pierre Boulez's "Notations," Elliott Carter's "Soundings," and Beethoven's "Choral Fantasy," with the conductor at the piano in the last two. Nobody ever said that Barenboim was meek. The concerts caused considerable excitement in Chicago, even among those who had never loved the conductor. Some listeners resisted his habit of insistently programming the likes of Carter and Boulez; others resented his pro-Palestinian statements, or criticized him for failing to evangelize to younger audiences. Nonetheless, spare tickets were going for five hundred dollars and up. On the last night of the series, a young man was seen out on Michigan Avenue waving a fistful of twenties, to no avail.

The Mahler Ninth felt like a recapit-



Barenboim is a fiery traditionalist who revitalizes familiar scores.

JACQUES DE LOUSTAL

ulation of Barenboim's Chicago career. The first movement was rocky at times, orchestra and conductor never quite settling on a central pulse—that stuttering-heartbeat rhythm that signifies the composer's knowledge of his own approaching death. Yet the playing was passionate in the extreme. There was an engaging wildness in the middle movements, together with more disagreements about tempo. (Some musicians have long been frustrated with Barenboim's habit of setting new tempos on the spur of the moment.) Finally, in the great Adagio that brings the symphony to a close, the picture snapped into focus; the heat of emotion remained, but the music coalesced into one long, glowing line. The audience contributed to the spell: during the tender cello solo that leads into the Adagissimo coda, an uncommon silence filled the hall, the sound of thousands holding their breath.

The Bruckner Ninth was cooler in mood, befitting a composer who carved out his music as if it were cathedral limestone. The performance advertised the fact that Barenboim has left the Chicago Symphony in splendid shape. People always marvel over the Chicago brass, and with good reason: they have no equal. Each time another *f* was added to Bruckner's stepwise crescendos, you could hear the gradation clicking into place, and the sound towered ever upward without cracking. But the Chicago strings are also world-class these days. They have acquired that darkly throbbing tone that used to be the sole property of the Berlin Philharmonic. They seemed especially in synch with Barenboim's roving beat; when he rocked backward on his feet, making the gestures of a drowning man, and then recovered to deliver a punching downbeat, they trembled and dug in with him.

The Carter and Boulez pieces were vividly executed, although neither ranks among the composers' best. "Soundings" is quirky and jokey, while "Notations" is a feast of fabulous orchestration. Moreover, the choice of two acclaimed modernists who came of age before 1950 to represent the music of our time exposed one major limitation in Barenboim's world view: he shows little curiosity about most contemporary music, and colleagues like Esa-Pekka Salonen and David Robertson leave him far behind in their quest for the new. Ultimately, Barenboim is a fiery traditionalist, who can revitalize the most familiar scores. There was nothing conventionally festive about his Beethoven Ninth; tension was maintained throughout, the bass Robert Holl struck a minatory tone in the first minutes of the finale, and even the closing recitation of the "Ode to Joy" had a desperate edge, as if the possibility existed that all men might not be brothers.

During the fifteen-minute ovation that followed the Beethoven, Barenboim went around shaking hands with—or, in many cases, hugging and kissing—all ninety-one members of the orchestra. In the process, an ovation that had initially been directed at the conductor became an ovation for the players, with waves of applause rising up for the longest-serving veterans. You forgot the maestro, and focussed on those who had made the sounds. Barenboim could not have made a more graceful exit.

The Hungarian composer György Ligeti, who died on June 12th at the age of eighty-three, was perhaps the most famous of living composers in his last years, yet he was reportedly haunted by the feeling that he would be forgotten after his death. He will not be. His legacy is a string of near-perfect pieces—among them "Lontano," the Requiem, the Horn Trio, the Violin Concerto, and the Études for Piano—and the composer's outwardly quizzical, secretly passionate personality is felt in every bar. Picking over a huge scrap heap of material, ranging from otherworldly avant-garde noises to fragments of Schubert and Brahms, Ligeti created works that resemble organic machines, as beautiful as they are alien. A long, painful illness prevented him from realizing his dream of writing an opera called "Alice in Wonderland," stemming from his love of Lewis Carroll. But his entire output is like the Alice stories come to life: the music that plays on the other side of the looking glass, mocking and transcending the ordinary world. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

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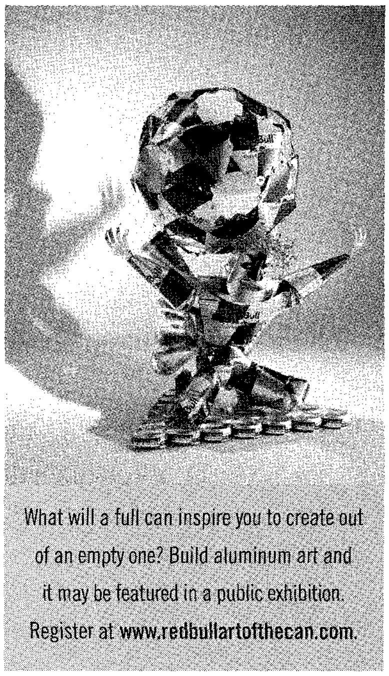

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DANCING

WESTWARD HO!

The Russians' next steps.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

Every few years, New York City Ballet stages its Diamond Project, which just means that the company commissions a handful of new ballets in the hope of coming up with something interesting or, failing that, of pepping up the dancers, who are always at their best in work made specially for them. This year, we got the usual bewildering assortment. The series led off with Eliot Feld's “Étoile Polaire,” in which a talented eighteen-year-old, Kaitlyn Gilliland, glided around prettily to Philip Glass and to no apparent purpose. Then came a ballet, “The Red Violin,” by Peter Martins, as skillful and empty as his works routinely are, and a strange piece, “Evenfall,” by the normally excellent Christopher Wheeldon, in which women in filigreed tutus bent over and stuck their butts up in the air to Bartók's beautiful Piano Concerto No. 3. In addition, there was an opaque business, “Two Birds with the Wings of One,” on a Chinese theme by Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux; a sort of struggling-in-the-dark transaction, “In Vento” (here the dancers really did look good), by Mauro Bigonzetti; and an instantly forgettable aerobic exercise, “Slice to Sharp,” by Jorma Elo. It tells you something about how ballet choreography is doing at the moment that each of these six men occupies either the first or the second creative slot at a “name” company. (Feld, Martins, Bonnefoux, and Bigonzetti are the artistic directors of Ballet Tech, N.Y.C.B., North Carolina Dance Theatre, and Italy's Compagnia Aterballetto, respectively; Wheeldon is the resident choreographer of N.Y.C.B., Elo of Boston Ballet.) Near the end of the series, however, another artistic director arrived—Alexei Ratmansky—and it looked as though an eagle had landed in the barnyard.

Ratmansky, aged thirty-seven, took over Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet two years ago. He has made more than twenty ballets, most of which have not been shown here. Before N.Y.C.B.'s season, I had seen only two pieces by him—“Cinderella” (2002), for the Kirov, and “Bright Stream” (2003), for the Bolshoi—but that was enough. Russia is in the torturous process of catching up with twentieth-century modernism, from which it was isolated for more than half a century, and Ratmansky was made by God to help it do this. Trained at the Bolshoi school, he was not accepted into the company. He spent most of his performing years at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and the Royal Danish Ballet, dancing in the European and North American repertory. In other words, like so many of Russia's first-rate artists, he is both Russian and Western.

The great thing about Russian writers of the late nineteenth century was their willingness to address, directly, the hardest questions of human life. That tradition was inherited by Russian choreographers. Nijinsky in “The Rite of Spring”; his sister, Bronislava Nijinska, in “Les Noces”; Balanchine in most of what he did—at times, you almost turn away from what they're saying. It's too much. With Ratmansky, you don't have to turn away, or not yet, but the instinct is the same. Unlike most ballet choreographers working in this country right now, he takes on the great themes—love, grief, marriage, death—and looks them straight in the face.

Ratmansky's contribution to the Diamond Project was “Russian Seasons,” to a 2000 score of the same name by Leonid Desyatnikov, who was clearly inspired by Stravinsky's 1923 score for “Les Noces.” Both compositions incorporate Russian folk music and folk songs; both are also very sophisticated. (Desyatnikov invokes not just folk material but also jazz and Steve Reich—and Stravinsky.) Then there's the subject matter. “Les Noces,” as its title tells us, has to do with one thing: marriage, which, if you were a Russian peasant, was a crushing event, forcing you to leave your youth behind and enter a stage of life where your job was just to produce more life, and then die. On the surface, Desyatnikov's score is not as monolithic, or as dire. Only five of its twelve sections have a song text, and, in keeping with the "seasons" title, they are keyed to the Russian Orthodox Church calendar—Whitsuntide, Shrovetide, etc. Nevertheless, three of the songs have to do with marriage, while the two others are about death. The marriage songs are death-like, too. In the world of this ballet, to be born is to start dying. The wedding is just when you get the news.

But the ballet wears no tragic mask. The dancers often do regular, unsentimental, "street" things. They run around; they knead charley horses out of their legs; they chat with one another. Even in the most mystical passage, nothing gets too heavy. Here is the lyric:

For you, the body, there is but one lot...
To go under the earth, to feed worms.
And me, the soul, I'll go repenting.
I went near Eden, I didn't get there...
Our Eden, it's a mighty merry place,
Birds are singing, flowers are blooming,
Oh, on the flowers angels are sitting.

N.Y.C.B.'s Jenifer Ringer and partners. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

To this song Jenifer Ringer enters, her expression rapt, her arms groping. She is searching for something—Eden, heaven—and everywhere she turns she comes up against some obstacle. Three men partner her, but they are not men; they are just the arms that support her quest, and block it. In the ballet's most beautiful moment, the men become the angels on the flowers in Eden. They sit on the floor in a neat little row, and she steps into their hands, then onto their knees, as she walks out into the air, into the void. "I went near Eden, I didn't get there": she doesn't get there, but no tears are shed. The whole thing, as serious as it is, looks like a children's game, which I think is what Ratmansky is saying about the hope of heaven. The thought is Russian, the manner Western. The casualness is a bit like Jerome Robbins's. Still, you are stabbed in the heart.

The last section of "Russian Seasons" explicitly unites the themes of marriage and death. Wendy Whelan, in a white wedding gown, dances gravely as the singer tells us that while we're alive we want everything, covet everything, but that after death we'll need only six feet of earth. To this song Whelan "dies," or she is carried out on the shoulders of her partner, Albert Evans. We don't see her expire, though. It's the ten other dancers who lie down in a row, claiming their piece of earth, as the curtain descends. Death, in other words, is not necessarily a drama. It happens every day, to people who are not tragic heroes but just the folks who have been jumping around upstage, behind the soloists. The tone is Mozartean, Tolstoyan, with mercy and justice in equal measure.

Shortly after the première of "Russian Seasons," the Kirov Ballet of St. Petersburg—the Bolshoi's sister company—opened at the Kennedy Center, in Washington, and here we saw a different take on modern Russia's confrontation with the West. The company presented two programs. One was its "Giselle." In Europe and America, this 1841 ballet has been gradually modernized, but the Kirov production still looks like a nineteenth-century lithograph. Then, in another program, the company shot us forward in time and showed us four pieces by William Forsythe, an American who decamped to Germany early in his career and there, in the eighties and nineties, created the most extreme version of postmodern ballet. Forsythe's work takes classical dance—ideally, all about harmony and perfectibility—and turns it on its head. His dancers glare at each other snottily. They do a few fancy steps, then slouch offstage. Ballet is an imposture, they seem to say.

And what the Kirov managers were apparently saying by setting this Forsythe program next to their antiquarian "Giselle" was that their dancers could do it all. They could be Kirov (elegant, old-fashioned) and also Western (tough and cold, as these people clearly see it). What they don't know is that Forsythe's ballets now look as dated as a nineteenth-century lithograph. The Kirov needs something truly new, and its own, not the work of an American hipster who gave ballet a slap in the face twenty years ago. Maybe the company should call Ratmansky. ♦

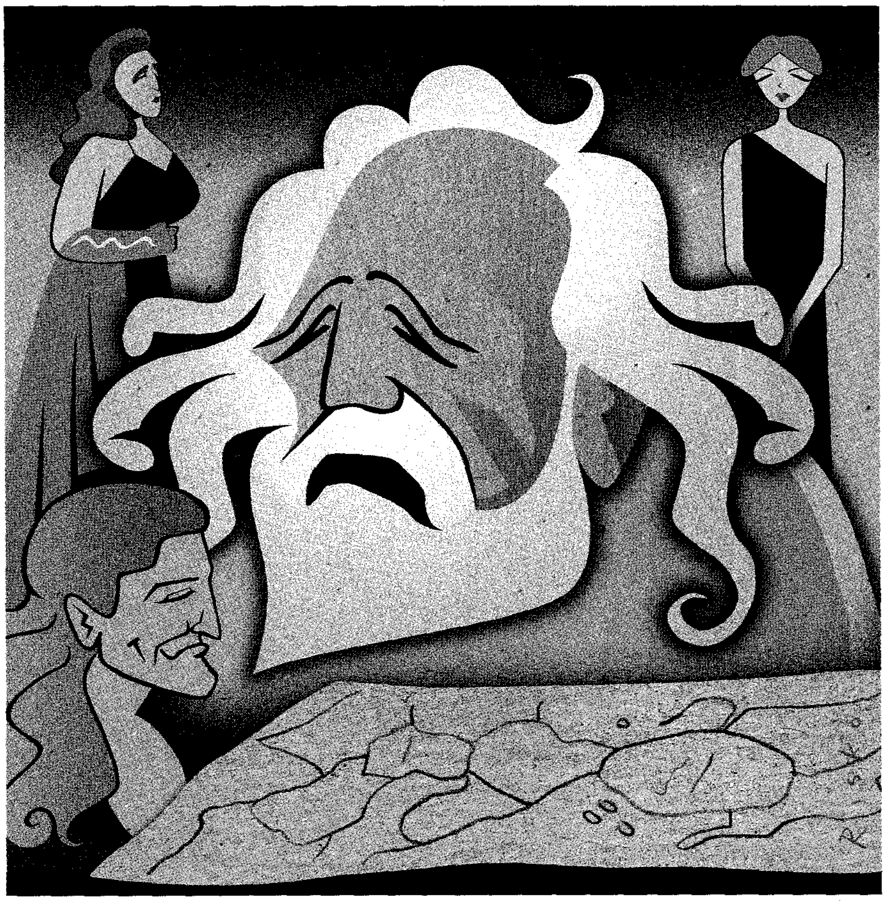
THE THEATRE

KINGS AND MONSTERS

Alvin Epstein's "Lear," and "The House in Town."

BY HILTON ALS

The radicalism of Alvin Epstein's portrayal of the title character in "King Lear" (an Actors' Shakespeare Project production at the La MaMa E.T.C. Annex) has as much to do with Epstein's body as with his mind. Traditionally, directors have filled this big role with a big man, or, at any rate, with the kind of actor who can send the "howl, howl, howl, howl" of Lear's paternal grief and madness pounding like a bass drum through the gaps in our self-possession. Epstein, however, who played Lucky in the New York première of Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot," and Clov in the first American staging of Beckett's "Endgame," approaches the role in a way that is neither self-conscious nor grand. Slight and shaggy-haired, he hops about the stage with what seems to be a childlike enthusiasm for the play; he is the least physically prepossessing Lear in recent memory. Instead of dwelling on the big round sounds of this lost king, Epstein slithers through Shakespeare's text like an aged but guileful salamander. He flicks his tongue into the linguistic honey pot of this epic poem on the delusions of the mind and of power, only to extract it coated in the bitterness of one who will not survive his grief, or the burden of self-knowledge. "No, no, no life?" Lear pleads to the lifeless body of his favorite daughter, Cordelia (Sarah Newhouse). "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, / And thou no breath at all?" The question is addressed more to Lear himself than to Cordelia's corpse. Loss makes philosophers of us all.



Epstein approaches the role of Lear in a way that is neither self-conscious nor grand.

ROBERT RISKO

Indeed, as Epstein plays him, this Lear is Plato in the crib. He speaks his wisdom as he nears his end, which is also his beginning. Flailing his arms about, his wispy white hair flaring above his delicate face, Epstein's Lear suggests that we do not know who we are until our existence is threatened. As he skitters on the edge of the precipice that separates life from death, the actor inspires a certain melancholy tenderness in the audience; we watch his bare feet with concern as he traverses the bark-strewn stage. (The exceptional décor is by David R. Gammons; and Bill Barclay's subtle sound design supports the dark, misty atmosphere.) From the start of the play, Epstein makes us aware that Lear is, in fact, a small man who was made large by the territories and children he acquired in his youth. Now, as he grows away from his earthly goods, his body becomes less powerful, too. In Act III, the director, Patrick Swanson, strips Lear down to his underpants. A storm rages around the fallen king and his fool (the striking Ken Cheeseman) as they search for their home, which is nowhere. Epstein's physical nakedness is the perfect visual counterpart to his emotional vulnerability.

It's a measure of Swanson's strength as a director that one forgets that Epstein wasn't great as Firs, the old butler, in the Atlantic Theatre Company's production of "The Cherry Orchard" last year. In any case, the only weak performer here is Newhouse, who is too busy smirking when she should be exploring Cordelia's purity of intent. As Edmund, Benjamin Evett more than makes up for her deficiencies. His Edmund's non-stop energy, cunning, and will to live perfectly balance Epstein's gentleness and ultimate resignation. Watching the two actors together, one cannot help thinking of the thorn and the rose.

Since he began his professional career as a playwright, in 1984, the forty-eight-year-old Richard Greenberg has written a total of twenty-eight plays, three of which have been produced in New York in the past year alone. Yet, while he has addressed a variety of themes in his work—baseball and homosexuality, motherhood and misogyny, the fantasies of the rich—he has essentially written only one play: about the terrible power of language when it's wielded as a weapon among the overly articulate. Greenberg's characters do not follow the standard dramaturgical trajectory of call and response; instead, they simply wait for their interlocutors to quit speaking. As soon as one solipsist is done, another jumps in with one more interior monologue tinged with regret, hope, or anger. Greenberg's work has a glacial quality: his characters are like bright-colored fish trapped in the solid ice of his heart. One has the sense, while listening to the flash and glow of his writing, that he doesn't so much feel his characters as delight in having invented them. They aren't fragments of his inner being; they're cogs in the gears of his dramatic presentations.

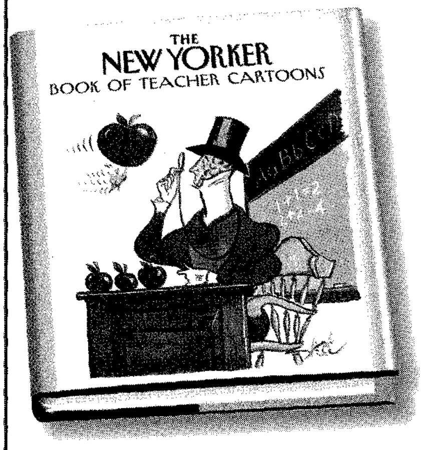
Greenberg has become something of a darling in the theatre world. Star actors, such as Julia Roberts and Jill Clayburgh, and in-demand directors, such as Doug Hughes and Joe Mantello, turn to him for material. (Clayburgh and Hughes collaborated on the recent Broadway production of his play "A Naked Girl on the Appian Way.") And it's not difficult to see why: Greenberg is all sheen without subtext. There's no need to dig deeper than the words, and his stage works are ultimately conventional. Aside from the verbal pyrotechnics, what Greenberg offers most often is shadowy or demanding women in a world full of one-dimensional men.

And that's what we get in "The House in Town" (directed by Hughes, at Lincoln Center's Mitzi E. Newhouse). Set in 1929, in a town house on the stretch of Twenty-third Street once known as Millionaire's Row, the play focusses on a couple: Sam Hammer (the stolid, square-jawed Mark Harelik) is a responsible Jewish furniture-store owner with a past; his wife of many years, Amy (Jessica Hecht), a Wasp from Saratoga, married him as much for his difference from her as for her parents' disapproval of it. ("How my parents hated you!" she tells him. "Always saying, 'What a brash young man! What an *arrogant* young man!' That was *before* drinks hour. After, it was always 'kike' this and 'kike' that. I loved how they hated you.") Now in their forties, Sam and Amy are bound together only by money, comfort, prestige, and exoticism. Despite Amy's longing for a baby, they are childless. In fact, at the start of the play they haven't slept together for quite some time. So Amy fills her days and nights with teas and cocktails, and visits with her best friend, Jean (the smart and funny Becky Ann Baker), who croons witticisms, defending her right to be a tattletale by saying, "It's not gossip when you know the person; it's *news*." Meanwhile, Sam has taken a shine to one of his employees, an intense young stock boy named Christopher (Dan Bittner). Christopher is perplexed by Sam's attentions, as is Amy: has Sam been avoiding her all this time because he's a homosexual?

Melodrama is Greenberg's signature form. He evokes the past—Ye Olde New York—because he's a conservator of sorts, a writer who doesn't want the fracture and splinter of our world to disrupt his tightly written linear narratives. Instead, he shakes the mothballs off the Philip Barry and Lillian Hellman drawing-room dramas of the nineteen-thirties, throws in a few jazzy references to hitherto "unspeakable" subject matter (anti-Semitism, male homosexuality, circumcision, and so on), and that's that. It's the actors here who generate a tension that doesn't exist in the script—particularly Hecht, who was so moving in the recent revivals of Arthur Miller's "After the Fall" and the Denzel Washington vehicle "Julius Caesar." Hecht brings a rare intelligence to her roles, one that cuts through any muddles inflicted by her directors. One can feel her struggling, as Amy, to give a certain depth to the material. With her bell-like voice, pale skin, and dark hair, she's a Dresden doll always on the verge of shattering. If she does crack, will poison seep out? Hecht keeps us in suspense.

Toward the end of the play, Amy reveals several ugly truths that she has kept tucked away behind her perfectly coiffed façade. In this way, she joins Greenberg's long list of monster women, all foul at the core of their niceness. What Amy has to say at the finale is less interesting to note here than what one leaves the theatre with: the sense that, for Greenberg, women represent an emotional inconsistency that is as frightening as change or death. His well-made play is, ultimately, a work of nostalgia, an expression of distaste for the ideas and emotions and women populating the New York we live in now. ♦

Straight-A Humor



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THE CURRENT CINEMA

KRYPTOLOGY

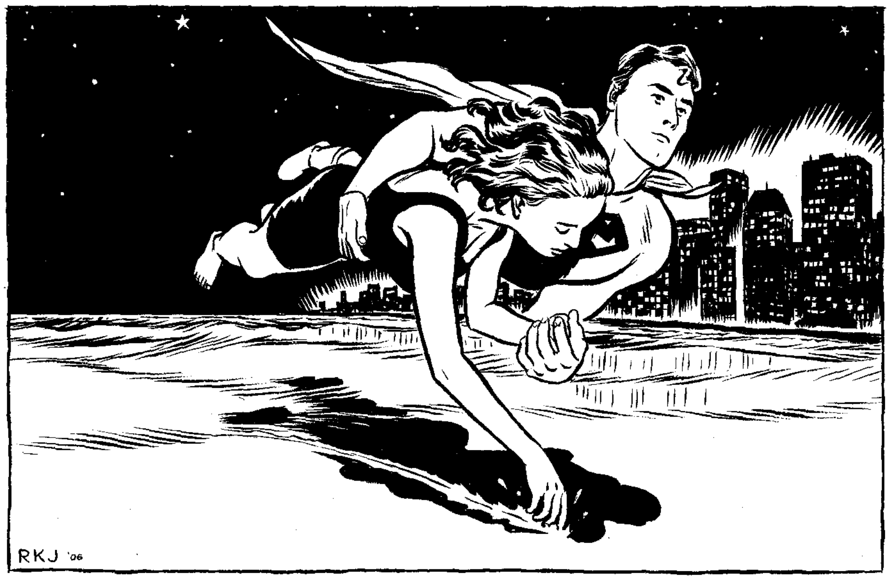
"Superman Returns."

BY ANTHONY LANE

A passing demographer, faced with a crowd lining up to watch "Superman Returns," will find much cause for reflection. There, in heady profusion, will be the flower of American youth, all of them waiting—with that blend of sullenness and agitation peculiar to teen-age boys—to see whether the special effects will meet their fastidious standards. With them will be parents of both sexes, affecting tedium but actually in the throes of a hidden thrill, hoping for a nostalgic return to the Christmas of 1978, when they necked in the back row to the surge of the John Williams score and the voice of Christopher Reeve. Dotted here and there will be Supermaniacs—some of them sporting red underpants, others in panty hose of royal blue, none of them happily married. Last, and quite alone, will be a weary *cinéaste*, submitting himself to two and a half hours of blockbuster because, and only because, it represents a final chance to witness the union of Eva Marie Saint and Marlon Brando.

They do not physically meet onscreen, but, for fans of "On the Waterfront," simply to see them together under the auspices of a single movie will be enough. Saint, her beauty still rendered mysterious by that faint air of distraction, plays the mother who adopted Superman when he first fell to earth, and to whom he now pays a return plummet, travelling back to the family homestead by fireball. Brando resumes the role of Jor-El, which sounds to me like a failed airline but is in fact the Kryptonish name of our hero's father. What this entails is a posthumous holographic rerun of Brando's meringue-haired turn from the original movie; as Jor-El drones instructions to his son ("You will see my life through your eyes"), moviegoers will be asking why, if the director, Bryan Singer, was hellbent on resurrecting a Brando performance, he had to pick this one. Why not bring back Terry Malloy, from "On the Waterfront," mumbling reassurance from a bloodied mouth? Who wouldn't take advice from Stanley Kowalski? Or Colonel Kurtz? One scene with him and even the Man of Steel would snap.

Superman, we learn, has been AWOL for five years. He claims to have been visiting his native planet, now a ruinous wasteland. Having dropped in on Mother, he travels to Metropolis in the guise of Clark Kent and retrieves his old job on the *Daily Planet*. Its editor is Perry White (Frank Langella), whose nephew Richard (James Marsden) combines the tasks of assistant editor and swain to Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth). Lois herself, far from lying idle during Superman's absence, has by now amassed (a) a son and (b) a Pulitzer Prize, for her essay titled "Why the World Doesn't Need Superman." Hell hath no fury like an earthling scorned.



Kate Bosworth and Brandon Routh en route to the Daily Planet.

R. KIKUO JOHNSON

Also back in the saddle is Lex Luthor (Kevin Spacey), who has been refining his vocation as an anti-Robin Hood: stealing from the rich, giving to himself, and not even considering the poor. With his band of merry thugs, he grabs magic crystals from Superman's arctic hideout, which is wondrously framed as a kind of frozen cathedral. What these are I never really gathered, but their potency is plain: just add water, and bang goes the power supply of the Eastern United States. Add more crystals to more water, and up from the seabed rises a fresh landmass, on which—if you are Luthor—you plan to build a whole new continent of your own devising. Picture my disappointment as I realized that, for all the pizzazz of "Superman Returns," its global weapon of choice would not be terrorism, or nuclear piracy, or dirty bombs. It would be real estate. What does Warner Bros. have in mind for the next installment? Superman overhauls corporate pension plans? Luthor screws Medicare?

Spacey certainly enjoys himself in the part, there being nobody else for him to enjoy, and he sprinkles a few grace notes over the basic maleficence. "Krrrrryptonite," he trills, in celebration of Superman's least favorite substance. Our villain's dress sense, too, like that of Parker Posey in the role of his disposable sidekick, has a lustre and a fussy correctness that are tailored to within a quarter inch of camp. Spacey must be one of the few men in the business who can slip into chocolate corduroy and get away with it. I saw him onstage last year, when he played Dexter in a revival of "The Philadelphia Story," and the arch tone of his delivery gave some of his speeches the swing and kick of a song; all that suavity came to naught, however, when you noticed the wrinkles in his tuxedo—not his fault, just a cinched theatrical budget. Here, in a film that cost more than two hundred million dollars, the clothing is without flaw (save for a polar-white overcoat, which Dick Tracy should have refused to lend out), but the character beneath is in tatters. Spacey dug around in Dexter, unveiling the wistful, Gatsbyish diffidence in the playboy; with Luthor, however, there is nothing to reveal. The actor may toy with his lines, but you feel a glazing of ennui as he realizes that the whole movie is stuck in toytown, where depth is against the law.

Bryan Singer, who last worked with Spacey on "The Usual Suspects," has since moved on, if not up, to two helpings of "X-Men," and now "Superman Returns." It is clearly the fate of a smart young director—Hollywood would call it a reward—to be garlanded with the opportunity to stop making films about human beings and start attending to the preternatural. Every time another Marvel or DC product is dusted off, lavished with computer programs, and pumped up into a motion-picture event, we hear the same inflated claims: this superhero is different; we will uncover this man's art and that man's scope; we will show you what makes them tick, or levitate, or spin. Even Ang Lee fell prey, rummaging around for the soul of the Incredible Hulk, until it became clear that the poor old minty monster didn't have one. The fact is that the only first-rate work to have fed off comic books was done by Roy Lichtenstein forty years ago, and the only comic-book movies to show any lasting swagger, like "Spider-Man" and its sequel, have hewed to the Lichtenstein line and mimicked the briskness and fluorescence of the painted surface. I have listened to Batman moan about how he will never fit in, and to countless mutants voice the same complaint, and, frankly, I don't give a damn. The ethical duties of Superman leave me cold; I just want to watch him catch a falling car.

The latest actor to don the cape is Brandon Routh, who—whether on his own initiative or not—offers not so much his personal interpretation of Superman as his best impersonation of Christopher Reeve playing Superman. This feels constrained, to say the least, allowing us limited access to Routh's potential charm, and it thickens our suspicion that we have seen the same tale told more cheaply before, although what, exactly, was so perfect about the 1978 project that it should warrant emulation? The new Lois Lane, Kate Bosworth, is not a patch on Margot Kidder, or, for that matter, on Teri Hatcher, in the TV series; much of Singer's casting errs toward the drippy and the dull, and your heart tends to sink, between the rampant set pieces, as the movie pauses listlessly for thought. "You wrote that the world doesn't need a savior," our hero says, "but every day I hear people crying out for one." His principal solution is to thwart individual robberies, which is unlikely to put either the police or the international aid agencies out of business. As far as the film is concerned, however, such public service confirms him in the Christlike status among mortals that was predicted by his dad. "They only lack the light to show the way," Brando declares, adding, "I have sent them you, my only son."

Is that blasphemy? Will Christians object to the hero's preferred floating technique, which is to descend quietly through space in the Crucifixion pose? I imagine not, if only because "Superman Returns" tries so hard to qualify as family viewing, which is another way of saying that its vague spiritual leanings resemble those of a sophisticated child. "The Usual Suspects" was a game by comparison, and yet the Spacey figure in that film, Keyser Soze, was an infinitely tougher conceit than the Man of Steel; he was a man with the ambitions of a superman, and the extremity of that delusion made him at once venomous, elusive to the touch, and richly entertaining. After that, any actual superman was bound to be a bore. "Mankind is a rope fastened between animal and superman—a rope over an abyss." That is Nietzsche, coiner of the Übermensch, and in "Thus Spake Zarathustra" he scorns what he calls "extraterrestrial hopes" in favor of those, rooted on earth, who struggle to overcome the weakness of their own humanity. That is a proper, if perilous, subject for grownup cinema, and I for one have grown tired of supermen, and superwomen, who start with such a flagrant advantage over the rest of us. Mind you, if Superman is such a paragon, how come he wants to save a species so universally dumb that not a single member of it recognizes him when he puts on a pair of glasses? ♦

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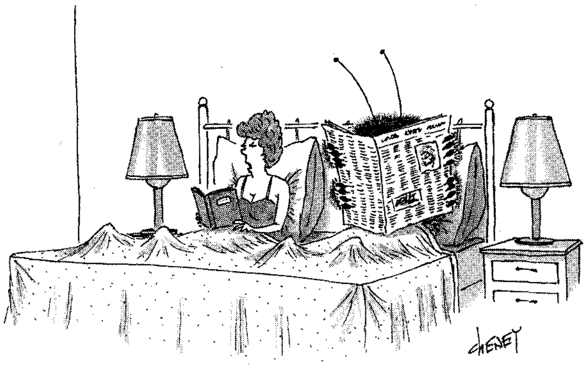
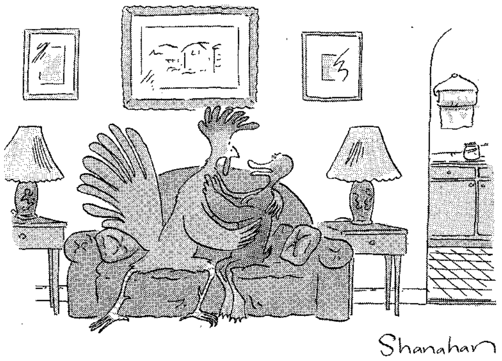
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by P. C. Vey, must be received by Sunday, July 2nd. Finalists in the June 19th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 24th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Two thousand eyes, but it still takes you all day to read the morning paper."
Ryan McCarroll, Los Angeles, Calif.



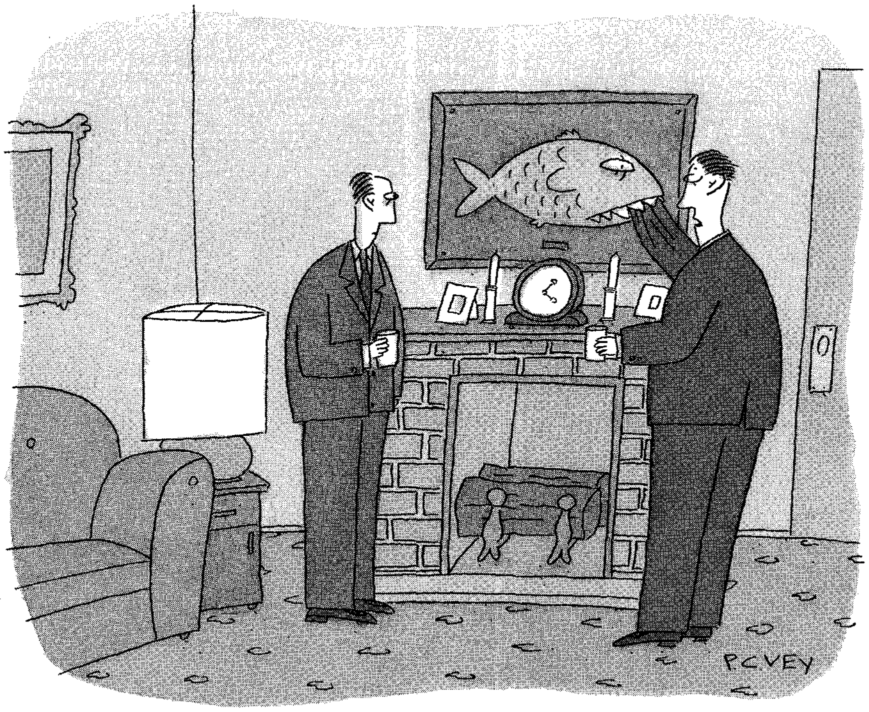
THE FINALISTS

"Wait. Would we still be doing this if the sky weren't falling?"
Cary Wong, New York City

"Quack means quack!"
Rajiv Joseph, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"So this is why you crossed the road."
David Fulk, Overland Park, Kans.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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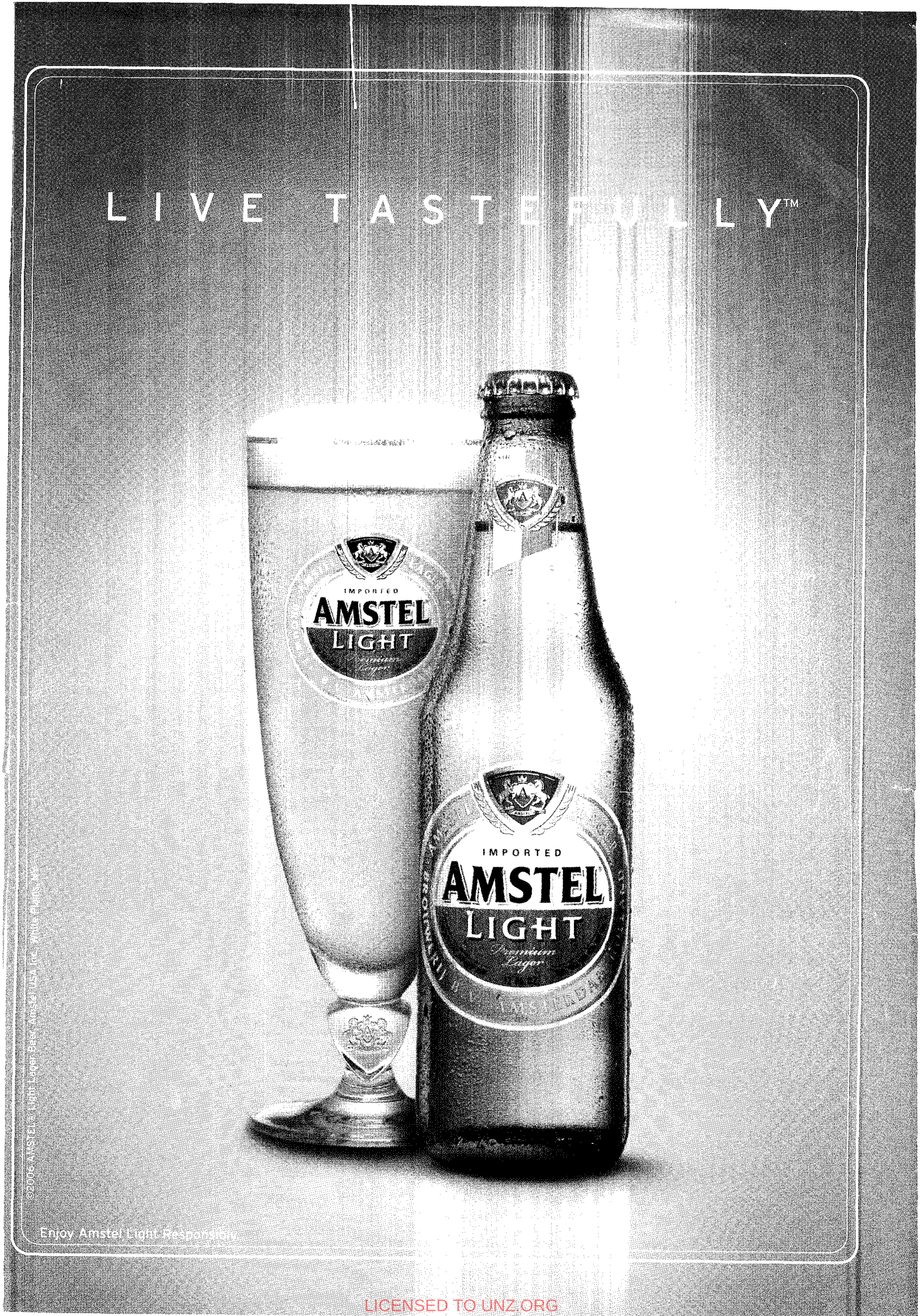
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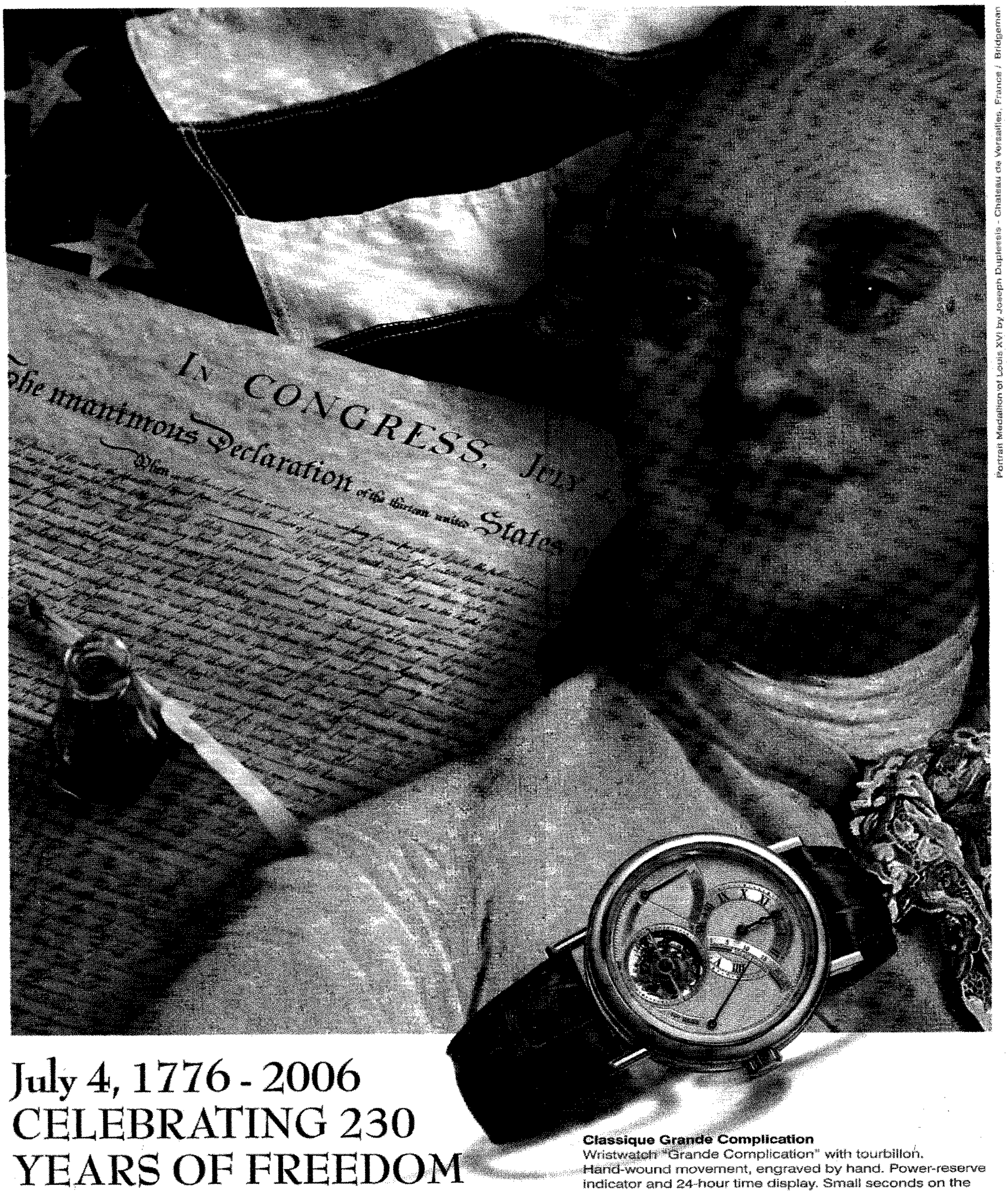

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